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ABSTRACT

On-the-job learning experiences of 47 school administrators, representing a broad range of administrative settings and roles, are described in this collection of reflective narratives. The authors, who had completed at least one year of training with the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA), wrote of how they applied learning acquired through CSLA training in a specific circumstance. Topics covered in the 10 chapters include accepting new school assignments; fulfilling professional development responsibilities; building school leadership teams; curriculum development; implementing student needs and strengths; utilizing student performance data for instructional improvement; goal setting; community collaboration; crisis management; and summer schools. (LMI)

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Reflections on Practice by California's Instructional Leaders

Volume I

EA 022 168

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Reflections on Practice by California's Instructional Leaders

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ABOUT FWL

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL) serves the four-state region of Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah, working with educators at all levels to plan and carry out school improvements. The mission of FWL is to challenge and enable educational organizations and their communities to create and sustain improved learning and development opportunities for their children, youth, and adults. To accomplish its mission, FWL directs resources toward: advancing knowledge; developing products and programs for teachers and learners; providing assistance to educational agencies; communicating with outside audiences to remain informed and to inform others about the results of research, development, and exemplary practice; and creating an environment where diverse educational and societal issues can be addressed and resolved. Additional copies of *School Leadership: Reflections on Practice by California's Instructional Leaders* can be obtained by contacting Tom Ross, Information Specialist, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California 94103 (415) 565-3044.

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ABOUT CSLA

The California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) was created under the leadership of California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig in response to the legislative mandate of the California School Reform Act (SB813). The mission of CSLA is to help aspiring and practicing school administrators strengthen their instructional leadership skills and strategies in order to improve student learning in California. By design, CSLA focuses only on instructional leadership—the crucial, although not the sole responsibility of school administrators. The program is based on the premise that effective instructional leaders are those who understand and utilize established processes or systems within any school or district to accomplish curricular and instructional improvement goals that lead to improved student learning. CLSA referrs to these processes as "instructional leverage points," and gaining leverage on the curricular and instructional process is the key outcome expected of CSLA training participants. CSLA training is available in all fifty-seven counties of California. For more information about the CSLA program, contact Sally Mentor, CSLA, 313 West Winton Avenue, Suite 373, Hayward, California 94544-1198 (415) 887-8808.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEVERAGE POINTS TAUGHT IN CSLA TRAINING SESSIONS

Increasing Your Leverage as an Instructional Leader–I-II-III
Creating a Vision for Instructional Excellence–I-II
Shaping the School's Culture to Promote Student Learning
Using Student Performance Data for Instructional Decisionmaking
Establishing Your School's Mission and Goals
Strengthening the Curriculum
Developing Instructional Skills
Providing Follow-Through Support for CSLA Participants
Building Top Management Support for Instructional Leadership–I
Increasing Your Leverage as an Instructional Leader–I-II
Taking Stock of Yourself as an Instructional Leader
Helping Your Staff to Grow Professionally
Increasing Staff Effectiveness Through Accountability
Promoting a Positive School Climate
Involving Parents as Partners in Promoting Student Learning
Building Top Management Support for Instructional Leadership-II
Enhancing Student Success through Positive School Climate
Monitoring and Adjusting Plans for School Improvement
Marshalling Resources for School Improvement
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Building a Quality English-Language Arts Program
Building a Quality History-Social Studies Program
Determining Appropriate Interventions for School Improvement
Building a Quality Science Program
Building a Quality Math Program

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Bill Honig, Superintendent of the California State Department of Education, (CSDE) has nurtured the CSLA program since its inception. CSLA's leadership team, Sally Mentor, newly appointed Executive Director of CSLA, Norman Glenn, Deputy Executive Director, Albert Cheng, Director of ATC Operations, Karen Kearney, Director of Training Development, Laraine Roberts, Director of Project LEAD, Carol Solis, Director of Support Services, and Donald Barfield, Consultant on Evaluation and Management Information Systems, embedded in CSLA training a strong emphasis on ongoing reflection and sharing among colleagues. CSLA's Administrative Training Center Directors served as vital communication links between FWL and the contributing authors. The CSLA colleagues of our contributing authors were generous with encouragement and critical feedback.

Judy Shulman, Project Director in FWL's Center for Teaching and Learning and driving force behind FWL's Case Development Institute, gave us a concrete model for recording school leaders' knowledge through the publication of her Close-to-the Classroom Casebook series. Members of FWL's Case Institute, in particular Nikola Filby, Ginny Lee, Carne Barnett, and Alexis Mitman, provided valuable assistance in reviewing selected cases. The design savvy of Bethann Berliner, FWL Research Associate, guided us in developing a format for the book.

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FWL wishes to acknowledge the special assistance of Albert Cheng, Director of CSLA Operations, in organizing reflective writing workshops for the contributing authors.

ABBREVIATIONS

The contributing authors use a number of abbreviations that, while familiar to California educators, may need some explanation for others. The California Assessment Program (CAP) and the California Test for Basic Skills (CTBS) refer to standardized testing programs in California. Senate Bill 813 (S.B. 813) is a major piece of school reform legislation, the Hart-Hughes Educational Reform Act of 1983. SIP refers to California's School Improvement Program, funded by the State Department of Education. GATE refers to California's Gifted and Talented Education Program.

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INTRODUCTION

Picture a major conference room full of school administrators. Now consider the volume of knowledge about instructional leadership in that room. This book is designed to capture some of that knowledge in a form that will encourage others to learn from the experiences and insights of school administrators. The 47 reflective narratives that follow provide readers a glimpse of the day-to-day challenges of school leadership in California's elementary and secondary schools. The book is one of a series of Far West Laboratory (FWL) publications that record in narrative form the on-the-job learning experiences of school practitioners.

About the Authors

The contributing authors are all members of the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) who have completed at least one year of CSLA training. The authors volunteered to write about their work in response to a written request from CSLA and FWL. Approximately 3,000 CSLA members were invited to reflect on some of the circumstances that arise in the complex, ambiguous and richly rewarding work of school leaders. Sixty-three school administrators expressed interest. Fifty of that group went on to complete the reflective narratives published here.

The authors represent a broad range of school settings and administrative roles. Sixteen write about their experiences in small rural schools. Another 16 work in suburban schools. Eighteen write about urban schools experiences; eight of those write about inner city schools. The majority of authors are school principals, although the book contains narratives by vice principals, district office administrators, curriculum coordinators, a superintendent and a school board member. Four narratives are written by aspiring administrators who have received training through CSLA but remain in the role of teacher, mentor, or resource specialist.

To produce the reflective narratives, the contributing authors first submitted a written draft describing how they applied learning acquired through CSLA training in a specific circumstance. After reviewing the drafts, FWL staff held a one day workshop with the authors to help prepare them for an oral presentation of their narratives in reflective practitioner sessions at the CSLA Convocation in October, 1988. The sessions provided an opportunity for the authors to discuss the experiences they had written about with the broader CSLA membership. Using feedback from these reflective sessions, the authors completed the narratives that follow. Although they focus on instructional leadership in California schools, the narratives describe issues that will sound very familiar to educators throughout the country.

The authors are quick to explain that they are not writing as education experts, and their narratives are not meant to be prescriptions for

practice. Rather, they are personal reflections about how these particular instructional leaders chose to apply their knowledge in specific circumstances. Neither the authors, FWL nor CSLA suggest that every account documents *expert* practice. The accounts do, however, record *real* practice. Although some changes have been made in the cases to protect the confidentiality of the authors and the schools about which they write, each account accurately depicts an actual workplace experience of a school administrator or an aspiring administrator. The authors tell us what happened when they applied a particular strategy, generally one learned through CSLA training, and what they might do if they were to encounter a similar circumstance again.

The Value of Reflection

Sharing on-the-job learning is a high priority for CSLA-trained administrators. The majority of CSLA members report that actual work experience is the most significant vehicle for learning about how to carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of school leadership. Unfortunately, the work realities of school administrators mitigate learning from day-to-day experiences. Administrators function in highly complex work environments that often require them to shift focus from one issue to another and make decisions about those issues every minute or two. Responsible for everything from student achievement, school curriculum, teacher professional growth, and child safety to building maintenance and parent fund-raisers, school administrators' work demands are dictated as much by minute-to-minute school needs as by thoughtfully developed action plans. In the course of a day, week, or school year, they have very little time for formal reflection about their work because the administrative in-basket is always full, and the overwhelming majority of the issues to be dealt with require immediate attention from the administrator.

In recognition of these work realities, CSLA routinely structures opportunities for its members to share honestly with peers both actual work experiences and the consequent questions, fears, and insights that flow from them. In their training, administrators are encouraged to keep journals and maintain contact with peers through CSLA's Administrative Training Centers and by offering reflective practitioner sessions at the yearly CSLA Convocation. Publishing the reflective narratives for a larger audience is another strategy to break through the isolation many administrators feel, to prompt discussion and reflection about the complexities and ambiguities of the work of school leaders. These two professional norms, reflection and collegiality, are two strategies that hold promise for helping school leaders benefit more fully from their on-the-job learning.

The topics for the narratives were chosen by the individual authors who volunteered to write. Their diversity reflects the range of issues and responsibilities that instructional leaders confront. You will read about what it feels like to step into a new principal's shoes and aspire

toward lofty school improvement goals while dealing with an in-basket full of broken plumbing, dangling ceiling tiles, teacher animosity, and neighborhood apathy. You will learn how it feels to be the fourth principal assigned to a school in five years who, after joking at her first faculty meeting that it appeared unwise to unpack her bags too soon, hears a teacher respond, "You got it right." Other authors describe problems ranging from smoking and dress code disputes to helping teachers use grade point averages for planning, starting a summer school program for at-risk youth, and changing entrenched departmental procedures for curriculum planning and review. One principal writes movingly of helping an entire school, and herself, cope with several tragedies that strike students in her school. Another writes of the frustrations of dealing with cultural differences and stereotyping by teachers and parents and the impact it has on students and the school.

The Potential Uses of Reflective Narratives

The narratives have a number of potential uses. Because they are not intended to provide pat answers to school leadership problems, they will prompt other administrators to think in new ways about how to grapple with similar issues. Aspiring administrators will benefit from a behind-the-scenes look at school leadership today. Individual administrators will learn that they are not alone in confronting thorny issues of school leadership. It is likely that they will find throughout the book circumstances that will sound very similar to ones they have faced. They may find validation of a strategy they have tried or learn an alternative approach that seems promising. Because not all narratives are examples of good practice, they may prompt reflection about what other factors ought to have been considered as a part of the circumstance described, or what other actions might have produced better results. Educators responsible for preparing instructional leaders for today's schools will find some of the narratives useful for provoking lively discussion about what constitutes expert practice. Education policymakers may benefit from reading some of the accounts of the impacts of various legislative mandates on school routines. Teachers may gain new insights into the complexity of their workplaces and the day-to-day challenges that their administrators face.

We have organized the reflective narratives under ten chapter headings. The narratives have been placed in a particular chapter according to the primary administrative issue that forms the narrative's core. Many narratives introduce a wealth of possible issues for discussion, and could fall under more than one chapter heading. Some narratives represent fully developed cases of instructional leadership that will be useful for professional development purposes. Others describe practices that the authors have found particularly useful in certain circumstances and serve as "tips" on strategies that seem to work well.

There is some redundancy in the topics because we wanted the contributing authors to write about what was most meaningful to them as well as to provide an opportunity for all administrators to publish. For example, several accounts suggest approaches to developing a school mission statement or using student performance data effectively. Each narrative by itself, however, is intended to stimulate reflection and discussion.

Be aware this is not a cover-to-cover page turner, to be read in one sitting. We suggest you identify the topical areas of most interest to you and chose from among the narratives in that section. The book follows somewhat the cycle of the school year. It begins by introducing you to reflections by newly assigned principals and proceeds through myriad leadership conundrums ending with suggestions about how to create a successful summer school program. In reality, the issues presented in the 47 cases could conceivably be raised with a school administrator in one form or another in the course of one day's work!

Finally, the authors' honesty about their work may alarm some who would wish that schools worked differently than they do. Again, we have tried to record for you the voice of *real* practice. We hope readers come away with some insights about the work and the workplaces of the people whom we have chosen to lead our schools. Certainly, you will find that instructional leadership in our elementary and secondary schools takes many forms.

Δ *For purposes of confidentiality, we have removed or changed all names of individuals, schools and communities. References to grade levels and subject areas have been changed in some of the narratives. Dates referring to specific school years have also been removed.*

I. *ACCEPTING NEW SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS*

In this chapter principals reflect on the experience of being assigned to a new school. Three of the four principals are in their first assignment as principal. The fourth, a veteran, talks about the challenges of replicating success in a school where she is the fourth principal in five years.

The narratives are:

1. Oh, You've Been Assigned There?

2. Transfering Successful Instructional Leadership

3. Don't Let Culture Issues Send Your School Climate Up In Smoke

4. CSLA Training Spurs Commitment To Initiating School Change

OH, YOU'VE BEEN ASSIGNED THERE?

The look -- a combination of sympathy, pity, and genuine anguish -- would come into the faces of colleagues when they attempted to "congratulate" me on my new assignment. After twenty-two years in the district, a long-awaited principalship was mine. But there didn't seem to be much reason for congratulations.

My large, urban elementary school enrolls Hispanic neighborhood youngsters and bused in Chinese and black students. Thirty-five certificated and classified staff work here. That first September, we all arrived at a school that was in a dismal state of ill repair: the stench of urine permeated the building; more windows were broken and boarded than were whole; toilets did not flush; sinks were clogged; paint, applied 25 years earlier, was peeling from the walls; the exposed classroom radiators leaked; and big chunks of ceiling tile were missing or hanging precariously above the heads of students and teachers.

If our 120-year-old building was in disrepair, the heart and spirit of the school were in even worse shape. The teachers worked in a cold-war atmosphere. Isolated from each other, they closed their doors and taught. Each classroom was a world unto itself. There was no discipline policy. No school-wide curriculum was articulated among classrooms at the same grade level let alone among classrooms at different grade levels.

As a new principal, I was eager to carry out new ideas in curriculum development and approaches to classroom teaching. I was committed to teacher empowerment and shared leadership, but I was faced with the task of orchestrating a tremendous change in some of the most basic fundamentals of school climate. Somewhere in the back of my mind a "school climate conscience" rang out, crying, "You can't even begin to think about student achievement until you have a clean, safe, secure environment for students and teachers."

One of the most difficult decisions I had to make professionally was to put curriculum and student achievement on a back burner. I had no choice but to start with basics that don't necessarily get reflected on district-wide achievement tests -- at least not formally. When it was time to hand in my goals for the year, other principals were putting down ways in which they might align curriculum and diversify teaching strategies while I sat in an office darkened by the clouded plastic, graffiti-marked windows and wrote my goals:

1. The learning environment in the building will be safe, clean and secure for each student and teacher.

2. The bathrooms and other areas of the school commonly used by the entire student body will be clean, functional, and safe for student use.

3. The cafeteria will be a pleasant place in which to eat breakfast and lunch. Students will be able to eat without disturbance by other students.

4. The playground and yard areas will be safe, clean, and secure for each student.

5. Teachers will begin to participate in professional decision-making. Morale and trust-building will occur.

6. Parents will begin to feel ownership in the school and its programs.

Once I had decided that I would hold my professional head high and focus my leadership and energies on the goals I set forth for that first year, I called a faculty meeting. Instructing children in the proper care of washroom facilities was definitely not the "vision" I had expected to impart at my first meeting! Openly and with complete honesty, I mentioned that these would be our immediate goals, emphasizing that they could not be attained by one person working alone. I outlined many ways in which we might support each other as we worked through these basic goals of school climate. To my relief, the faculty joined in the planning, with specific suggestions for how to put these goals into practice.

We were all relieved with the frankness and honesty which was a part of putting these things out in the open. These were common goals we could all support. It was a start! A large school, a diverse student population, teachers working individually with great potential but no experience in working together -- all these had to be put into perspective. What could provide a mortar for all of these building blocks?

The initial answer was the written word: a daily bulletin for teachers and staff would go out. I interwove routine matters and humorous incidents in the daily bulletins so that a common thread would run through each day. Soon ideas and feelings were sparked. Teachers began talking among themselves about shared perceptions of our work together. On the three occasions during the first year when I was unable to do the bulletin, teachers laughingly complained of "bulletin withdrawal." A parent bulletin went out weekly in three languages -- nothing elaborate, just newsy items about the school, what had been repaired, what we were working on, and ways that parents might help children at home were included. School climate was being created through both formal and informal communication networks.

The old building was scarred by graffiti wars between two of the local gangs. I called some local muralists and got "educated" about graffiti art. I read one of the books on the subject of graffiti, sat through the movie *Beat Street*, and walked through the neighborhood on a "graffiti tour." One of the pieces of graffiti in the yard included a message: "Sorry for the drips but it started raining." Moved by the message which said to me "someone cares about what he is doing with this art," I conducted a door-to-door search in the neighborhood asking questions about the graffiti art and mentioning that I'd like to "commission" some special "pieces" for the playground. The search led me to "JAMZ," a respected "tagger" who was responsible for much of the unrelated "pieces" in our yard.

Caring about our Environment

Our school playground is now beautified by large graffiti pieces put up to enhance the learning environment at the school. Each piece reflects the "ART IS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE" theme that JAMZ and the other "taggers" worked out with a teacher committee and me. One Monday morning I found a note under the door to my office (which faces the yard). It said, "Special surprise for you, open the door and look at the wall!" I opened my door and peered out. There to greet me was an exquisite rendering of my personal heroine, Eleanor Roosevelt, done with a can of black spray paint! Eleanor still overlooks our playground with a very special meaning for all of us! The taggers were amused by the fact that I insisted on calling them Graffiti artists. I knew that their own self images had changed when, working late one evening in my office, I heard a knock on my door. My "Who's there?" was answered with "The graffiti artists!"

Teachers had kept a scrapbook on the ugliness and destruction of the building during the year preceding my arrival. I started another scrapbook. This one featured the changed and happy times which were coming about because of our being together. When one of the graffiti artists knocks on my office door and asks to show *our* scrapbook to his girlfriend, or when teachers come to me with pictures for *our* scrapbook, I know that it is part of the adhesive of school climate that is holding us together as a professional family.

Only 40% of the students at our school are from the neighborhood. Daily, many neighborhood youngsters get on school buses right in front of the school and head out to other areas of the city passing busloads of youngsters from those neighborhoods on their way to our site. This posed a two-pronged problem:

1) How to make the neighborhood community respect the school site as a valued place when the larger share of the children go to school elsewhere.

2) How to help parent communities located outside of our immediate neighborhood feel a valued part of the school.

Both parts of the problem created the negative school climate that surrounded our children, and both had to be addressed. The first problem was attacked from the solution backward: we needed something immediately visible to show the community that things had truly changed, and we needed a program for community youngsters which would bring them into the school area to let them know that they belonged there.

Building our School Community

A Principal's Effectiveness Grant from the district's education fund provided for the painting of murals on the inside of the school playground which depicted children of all ethnicities engaged in some of the rites and rituals which had become a part of the Eleanor Roosevelt picture over the years: Cinco de Mayo celebrations, kickball and soccer games, and kindergarten balloon send-offs were only a few school rituals depicted in the mural. The bright, new image which the playground murals gave to the neighboring community carried two messages: "Things are changing here. This is not the same old school which you saw covered with graffiti and littered with neighborhood garbage," and "Children, the future of us all, are important here."

This wasn't enough, however. To complete the schools re-connection with the community, a new person was on our site. A small portion of the education fund grant was earmarked to pay a playground director who would conduct after-school programs at our site. Toward the end of that first year, the program with our city's Parks and Recreation program was worked out so that a full-time director for after-school and Saturdays would be located at the school's playground for all neighborhood children, pre-school through teenage years.

Today, a full component of students after school and on Saturdays use the school's playground. School teams in baseball and soccer are regularly cheered on by students and community residents. The teams are made up of students who attend our school, but over 50 percent are from other schools, living in the community.

Tackling Teacher Isolation and Withdrawal

Empowering teachers and putting people who had worked in isolation into a team was a big order to fill. To begin with, teachers were organized into grade-level groups and met together weekly for 40-minute sessions before school, and once monthly for 60-minute sessions during the school day. I bought time for their meetings by "spelling" teachers -- covering their classes -- taking whole grade levels of youngsters monthly for large-group instruction. Topics for grade level concern ranged from working on a school-wide discipline policy to reading and discussing the *CARNEGIE REPORT*, setting

priorities for curriculum concerns, and openly addressing issues that were separating the bilingual teachers from the regular teachers. Ideas and concerns raised by grade-level groups were brought to faculty meetings, and we worked out solutions jointly.

I encouraged and helped individual teachers to write small grant proposals for classroom innovation. The teachers took this task very seriously and the local funding sources did award us a number of grants. To date, we have received nearly $100,000 in grant funding since that first year. I encouraged teachers to apply for mentorships, and can remember carrying one mentor application to the district office myself when the teacher didn't think he had a chance. He is now a mentor.

Today, the building looks better, the inside has a fresh coat of paint and smells are those common to all schools. We have a dedicated group of parents who take pride in our building and program, and work with the staff to co-teach their children at home. Today's task and school goals lie in two areas: Maintenance of the changes in building and attitude which took the better part of two years to bring about, and moving ahead in the area of curriculum and staff development necessary to give our children a competitive edge in society.

Thinking Ahead

My leadership style during the initial "turnaround" was open and inclusive. I encouraged and reinforced a broad range of approaches for change. I wonder now whether the open style so necessary for the climate turnaround might be a drawback when it comes to curriculum and staff development. I see things to be done now, and get impatient for change. We've come this far, and I want to jump ahead and get it all done. Patience seems to be what I need now. Could I ever duplicate all of this again? Would I have the patience to duplicate the slow goal-setting and goal-attainment strategies necessary for this turnaround? Maybe it is no coincidence that my first experiences with the principalship should demand so much first-time personal learning on my part. We are beginning to tackle curriculum problems together now. I am hoping that my teachers can buy into my global look at the total situation and keep trying to find solutions with me.

The greatest strength we have is in our collegial feeling. Teachers aren't isolated from each other, and we are able to share problems and successes like members of a family. I try to be in the lunchroom for at least part of each of the two lunch periods. Typically, a conversation might be directed to me, "I'm really excited, my kids are in the middle of English transition, come in this afternoon and see." "I'm having some trouble with classroom management when I teach math...could Mary come in and take a look? Would you give her a little relief to do it?" The professional family is coming together!

TRANSFERRING SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Jane met with the district superintendent at his request. During the conference she was informed that she was being transferred to Neighborhood Elementary School. A 10-year veteran administrator, Jane had no objection to being reassigned. Her only question was, "Why Neighborhood?" The superintendent responded, "Perhaps the little things you do may not be so little."

Jane knew a few things about the school from working in the district. Neighborhood is a suburban elementary school of about 400 students, most of whom walk from the housing development it serves. A quarter of the teachers had been teaching the same grade in the same classroom at Neighborhood since it was built 25 years ago. The average tenure of staff was 15 years. Jane would be the fourth principal in five years. Two of her predecessors had requested reassignment, one because his blood pressure went up 10 points on the job. The school was located on an unseeded nine acres. With no sprinkler system, the playground was dusty. The short roots of the weeds would dry up and tumble across the campus. There were dirt and weeds in front of each classroom daily. At night and on weekends, motorcyclists and small cars would race on the grounds. Vandalism was very high at the school. The grounds were covered with litter, including broken bottles.

Fourth Principal in Five Years

In a preliminary visit to the school, Jane learned there was a great deal of animosity and anger among the staff. Teachers did not talk to one another. Two primary teachers dropped their heads as they approached an upper grade teacher to avoid speaking. At least three teachers never entered the faculty room, where there were clearly designated territorial rights. The room had round tables and every seat was virtually assigned to one particular teacher -- and only that teacher. Similarly, every space in the parking lot had a "claim stake" on it. When Jane parked in the first space, she was admonished by a teacher whose parking spot it had been for 20 years. There was no space marked "Principal." Books and materials were considered private property. Several different textbook series were being used throughout the school according to individual teacher preference with no concern for coordinating with colleagues. In fact, some teachers would not readily disclose which series they used to other teachers on the faculty.

Staff animosity played havoc with routine scheduling. There was no morning-recess duty schedule, leaving teachers responsible for supervising their own class or making private arrangements to trade-off with a friend. Indeed, one teacher complained that in order for her to take a morning break, she left her students "in the hands of God." Alliances affected student placements. It was rumored that the fourth grade teacher recommended her best students to her fifth grade ally. The fourth grade teacher was the ringleader who incited

primary colleagues to complain about upper grade teachers and the administration. Often rude and abrasive to other staff members, she was adamant about changing any part of her program, which was a classic example of outdated textbook instruction with no field trips of any kind. The special education teacher, who was new to the faculty, told Jane, teary-eyed, that two of the primary teachers would not allow their children to play with her students. In fact, they did not want her children on the playground at the same time theirs were playing. She asked to move to a classroom away from the fourth grade class.

Among upper-grade staff members, a teacher complained that others at that level would not share field trips or other special activities with her students. Additionally, Jane was told that the custodian never smiled, and parents complained that he avoided any encounter. Teachers claimed he favored and sided with the primary teachers and withheld services from some upper-grade teachers. For example, an upper-grade teacher reported that the custodian would not fix her pencil sharpener or replace her flag. Finally, the school secretary allegedly complained about all the teachers and engaged in community gossip.

Jane discovered that the community favored the school's instructional program but was dissatisfied with the lack of student discipline and low staff morale. Most visitors described the school as unfriendly. Parents perceived most teachers as good, traditional teachers. However, teachers often complained about each other's practices to the parents -- with repercussions. A parent complained that her child was severely punished on the playground because the supervisor did not like the child's teacher. Discipline was inconsistent at best -- stated rules often went unenforced. The one piece of good news Jane learned was that parents, predominantly homeowners and blue-collar workers, wanted to participate more in school. For three years their goal had been to put in a sprinkler system to have a sports field. After three years of fundraising, they still had no sprinkler system.

In short, the climate at Neighborhood School as Jane found it was distrusting, suppressive, hostile and negative. At her first faculty meeting during her spring visit, Jane jokingly stated that it appeared unwise for the principal to unpack her bags too soon. A teacher responded, "You got it right."

That summer, Jane immediately went to work on two major fronts: staff problems and parent concerns. She produced a handbook emphasizing teachers' rights and responsibilities, and describing the academic and social endeavor of Neighborhood School as a team effort. Playground rules with suggested consequences for infractions

were listed in the handbook. She reviewed the research on positive and non-contingent reinforcement and set as her goal to model the behavioral technique for establishing a positive school climate.

The "Little" Things That Got Done

The faculty room was redecorated, the round tables replaced with three long tables. Jane requested that the third space in the parking lot be repainted "Reserved for Principal." She also visited every home within the school vicinity, asking the home owner to call her if they observed any vandalism occurring at the school.

As the year got underway, she recruited teachers to work on a rainy-day schedule, playground rules, game rules, and so forth. Following each request she put a tangible reinforcer in the mail box: a chocolate candy kiss, a coupon good for one free lunch duty, a big doughnut. To protect the teachers' rights to a "break" in the morning, she selected a group of teachers to work on a duty schedule. When this was accomplished, she put a thank-you note and a rose ("This bud's for you") in each teacher's box. Reiterating her determination that teachers' discipline policies be consistent throughout the school, she directed the third grade teacher to discontinue the practice of having students stand with their noses to the wall during recess, explaining that the practice was both humiliating and dangerous to students unable to see a ball coming.

To begin to create a cohesive instructional program, Jane met individually with each staff member, sharing her objectives, soliciting theirs, and inquiring about the materials they used. The previous principal had already scheduled a workshop on conflict management. Jane asked staff from the county office to facilitate. After teachers were allowed to vent their anger and frustration at past school practices, they began to realize that they would be held accountable for the success and well-being of their students and agreed to focus on students as the basis for communication and problem solving. A process for mending faculty divisiveness was beginning to take shape.

Determined to capitalize on initial parent interest, Jane wrote to the Community Projects Office asking for financial help for a playground project. She received assurance of some matching funds for school projects. She then met with key parents and formally structured a Parent Faculty Club. At the first PFC meeting, Jane presented the parents with a check representing 100% membership of the staff! She had personally paid for two teachers who refused to participate to get the impact of the 100% support. The incentive for teachers to join was that the Parent Faculty Club wanted to sponsor field trips and see that sprinklers were put in. In all, the PFC determined that to improve their school they needed: (1) better communication; (2) a sprinkler system for their playground; (3) a trusting relationship

between school staff and parents; and (4) the continuation of the upper-grade sports program that had been started by the previous principal. With teachers as well as parents as paid members, they now had $2,400.00 towards the $9,000.00 goal.

By spring staff morale was building. They held grade-level meetings at Jane's house to create a relaxed, more friendly environment. Jane hosted TGIF on the last Friday of the month and provided a lunch on their minimum day. She made regular classroom visitations and was always visible on the playground. She took lunch duty each Friday to release the teacher. (Paid supervisors were also provided.) She also dealt head-on with one of the most difficult staffing problems.

Throughout the year, the fourth grade teacher accused Jane of favoritism. On one occasion she told Jane publicly that she (the teacher) was a true professional and that Jane was being influenced by "certain others." Jane asked the teacher to step into her office. Alone, Jane told her that the principal was not paid enough "to take crap from a prima donna." Jane recommended the teacher transfer. At the end of the year, she did. The custodian, who remained uncommunicative and unhelpful to all but a few favored teachers received an unsatisfactory evaluation. By the end of Jane's second year, he too had transferred.

Half a Playground

In April, the Parent Faculty Club had enough money to do half the playground. The school board voted to allocate money to provide grass seed, and the maintenance department provided equipment and services. The parents and some teachers worked with the maintenance department on a Saturday to install sprinklers. They received local newspaper coverage for their extra effort.

Other things happened during the year to establish school pride. The school sold T-shirts with the school logo. Students participated in a contest to name a mascot for the Neighborhood School. A student traffic patrol was reinstated. The upper-grade students participated in an outdoor education program. Neighborhood School participated in the district sports program. Students produced a weekly newsletter and interviewed a teacher of the week with a short feature on the classroom. With the help of some very creative parents, our oldest class published two newspapers as a class project. Another teacher took her class on a clean-up campaign, clearing litter from the nearby park. They wrote to the mayor who in return decreed a week in March as clean-up week. Again, the local newspaper covered the event.

Toward the end of the year, the parents hosted a lunch for the teachers and invited the superintendent. Teachers presented a letter of recommendation for Jane to the superintendent, although two

teachers did not sign. They asked that Jane remain principal of their school. This vote of confidence was a welcome surprise to Jane. But she knew that her work building community morale had just begun.

In the fall of the following year, the staff participated in a goal-setting workshop that resulted in teachers developing a school mission and a timeline for measuring successful progress. Teachers were able to establish a school-wide plan for curriculum and assertive discipline as their main objectives for the year. Jane selected four teachers (two upper and two primary) to be on a Principal's Advisory Committee. Three teachers made up an assertive discipline committee. Professional development money was made available through the district office to support these goals.

Postscript

Today, Neighborhood School has a school-wide reading and math series, a clearly defined assertive discipline plan, nine acres of grass, three baseball diamonds and two soccer fields. SAT and CAP scores have improved. Students, teachers and parents recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of Neighborhood School.

Vandalism has virtually ended. Parents are so delighted with the changes that they have set aside a fund for positive student incentives and self-esteem activities. So far, teachers have submitted two model programs for national award consideration. Both received second places. The new custodian keeps all staff fully supplied and cared for! The principal has definitely unpacked her bags. Those "little things" meant a lot.

DON'T LET CULTURE ISSUES SEND YOUR SCHOOL CLIMATE UP IN SMOKE!

I am a first year principal of a large, rural elementary school. The teachers and classified staff work well together. Most were selected to move to the site when it opened three years ago. The previous principal had been an administrator for more than 25 years and was the planning principal for this model facility. His strength was public relations and he set a high priority on a smooth-running campus.

While the plant is more than adequate for the number of students for whom it was initially built, the extra children we now enroll push the limits of our service and support facilities. There is one designated smoking area, the staff lounge. This is the only place on campus where employees can eat, relax, and work away from children. It is adjacent to the teacher workroom and office.

The first day I went to visit, I was made aware of very strong feelings about smoking on campus. The secretary, an ex-smoker, made pointed comments about the custodians, all of whom smoke. They replied in kind. I tucked this in the back of my mind and proceeded with the monumental task of opening school. But I didn't ignore the warning signs of discontent. The weekend before school opened, I cleaned up the patio adjacent to the lounge and provided outdoor furniture. I was hoping the smokers would take the hint and go outside to indulge their habit. I did not make rules, establish procedures, or address the issue in any way. I assumed there was a tacit agreement on when and where to smoke.

Just Decide

After school opened, I was approached by individuals and small groups who wanted "something done" about the smoke in the lounge. Each said the issue had never been addressed and was causing hard feelings on all sides. The vocal non-smokers focused on the health issue and were quite self-righteous. The smokers began to assert their "right" under district policy to a designated smoking area. Another group wanted the issue resolved and told me "just decide." They'd live with it.

I am a non-smoker and have strong feelings about people's right to a smoke free environment. I also believe that adults working with children should serve as models of healthy behavior. If I had my choice, I would ban smoking from all schools. In fact, I asked for a district-wide decision to eliminate smoking from school grounds completely. No deal. At my previous site, this same issue had simmered and bubbled all year, causing a great deal of tension and anger. I was determined to "clear the air" once and for all since I was now "the leader," but the issue here had festered for two years, and it was a delicate one. The site chairperson of the teachers' organization is a very sensitive smoker who hears every comment as a personal attack. Two of the most active parent volunteers and the PTA President are also heavy smokers.

I didn't feel naive in taking on the problem. I had decided that the leverage point most applicable was analyzing and using elements that contribute to the organizational culture of a school. I also knew I could use personal and position power. Certainly I understood the importance of developing collegial relationships. I also recognized that while this issue did not directly affect instruction, the impact it had on harmonious working relationships was enormous. It also influenced the perceptions the staff developed about me as their leader. After much consideration and discussion with the assistant principal, I decided to use group problem solving to reach an equitable solution about to where to smoke and when. I established a Lounge Committee.

Members of the Lounge Committee devised an action plan. They gathered information from other sites. The fire marshall toured the school and suggested alternate locations for a smoking lounge. One member researched relevant policy and laws. I presented the problem to my fellow CSLA members for advice. They brainstormed, set priorities, finally deciding that smoking should be limited to certain times, allowing for a smoke-free lunch. The plan was presented at a staff meeting. Unfortunately, all members of the committee were non-smokers. Most teachers were not pleased! The smokers felt they were treated like second class citizens. The non-smokers wanted a totally smoke-free lounge.

Back to the Drawing Board

Next, we asked each staff member to suggest a solution. Almost every staff member contributed a suggestion. These were categorized and placed on a ballot form. Teachers were asked to select the three options they favored, numbering in order. No one followed the directions. No proposal received a majority of votes. The only clear point of consensus was that most people would agree to limit smoking in some way - but what way?

At this point, I revised the committee's original proposal. Using input gathered at the staff meetings, I declared we would try the revised plan for 30 days. It was to smoke at one table only, to clean the ashtrays at the end of each recess, and to smoke outside during the nine lunch periods. All teaching staff and most of the other smokers followed the plan, but it did not solve our problem. The grumbling continued.

We tried a second plan, purchasing a large air cleaner on 30 day trial. This failed too. The staff felt the cleaner made the situation worse because the smokers felt they could light up at anytime, at any table.

The only good thing to come out of so lengthy a process was the vindication of our five teachers who do smoke. Others determined that they were considerate of non-smokers and not the major source

of smoke. Instead, the custodians, maintenance workers, classified staff and parent volunteers seemed to produce the offending smoke. The head custodian, respected and very well-liked, was eventually singled out as a heavy smoker resistant to change. Only sometimes did he smoke outdoors.

However strongly we felt about a smoke-filled room, none of us wanted to divide the staff. We fell back to considerate behavior not a smoking rule per se. The staff did not divide along smoker/non-smoker lines. Vocal non-smokers stood up for their smoking friends. Teachers who continued to be bothered by the smoke passed through the lounge but did not linger. During group activities, no one smoked inside. All teachers who smoke now do so on the patio unless the weather is bad. We have all increased our awareness of how our behavior affects others.

With consideration reigning, things settled down. One heavy smoker requested a transfer to another site at the end of the semester. I did not discover until April that she felt she had been singled out for persecution. The union leader has attempted to quit smoking.

This has been a no-win learning situation for me. I see now that this was my initiation as a first year principal. If smoking had not been the issue, something else would have cropped up so the staff could learn how I approached and worked with problems. The underlying issue was "How are we going to resolve problems and differences around here?" The staff needed to learn my style and I needed to put my belief in collaboration into practice. I believe I used the smoking issue to let the staff know I am willing to listen and work for compromise, even though this may be cumbersome and time-consuming. Going through the very lengthy process allowed us to get to know one another and hammer out a working relationship based on mutual respect and trust.

In Retrospect

I might have done just as well to make rules and take the criticism. This would have been a use of my position power and would have been more difficult to enforce. I most likely would have ended up being a policeman and confronting people who did not comply. In the interest of collegiality and collaboration we spent a long time on a seemingly petty issue. Although no one is totally satisfied, we are all living with the compromise solution.

Were I to re-live this situation, I would begin differently. I would ask each person to provide written input first, then include people from each special interest group to serve on a committee to formulate a policy. For the coming year, smoking rules will be posted, and I will personally speak to each smoker. I will focus on the classified staff and visitors who seem to contribute the most smoke. With more than seventy adults using the lounge each day, we will continue to stress consideration of others.

Had I not had CSLA training, I would not have seen this as a culture/ climate issue and most likely would have alienated many people. I learned to take ownership of the site in a non-threatening manner and to work with the total group on issues which affect everyone. I have also learned to look at all aspects of a situation and think of possible consequences for all parties before acting. Recognizing the importance of developing my own leadership style, I am more able to apply the lessons learned on this issue to new situations.

CSLA TRAINING SPURS COMMITMENT TO INITIATING SCHOOL CHANGE

In August, I was selected to be the principal of a K-4 school in a growing bedroom community for working families who commute to the Bay Area. This was my first assignment as principal, yet I already had experience in many school roles: eight years as an elementary teacher, two years as an elementary resource teacher, six years as an elementary program manager (Early Childhood Education, Chapter 1, School Improvement Program, English as a Second Language), one year as the assistant principal of a junior high school, and five years as the assistant principal of a large high school. Since the former principal had resigned under unfavorable conditions, I was entering during tense times. I knew there would be a need to build trust with both the community and the staff. With all my experience, I was ready for the challenge. I realized that I had also inherited a potential gold mine. We had an energetic young staff, high average achieving students, an active PTA, concerned, willing parents, and a supportive school district.

After taking a look around, I decided some things needed to be changed. The first was the image of the administrator. The former principal worked from behind a desk and was viewed as a supplier of materials. His staff development program consisted of weekend meetings and field trip chaperoning. His method of decision making was to hand decisions down. I wanted to be seen as an active listener who promoted team dialogue and shared decision making. I also wanted staff development to be an integral part of school rather than a weekend exercise.

The second challenge was getting teachers to talk to one another about the substance of their work. I needed to bolster teachers' self-esteem by encouraging collegial sharing, team meetings, inservice activities and clinical supervision. Parents also needed to know how much I valued their support of our school.

In the first year, I was determined to be visible and available to teachers, students and parents. I was out on the playground before and after school, and during recess and lunch. Parents took the time to stop and chat before and after school. They expressed their apprehension and appreciation for the open school atmosphere. One student asked, "What are you doing out here? You're supposed to be in your office." This reinforced my hunch that visibility was important.

I supported the PTA, and at the same time lifted the requirement that all teachers be present at each PTA meeting. We selected a representative from each grade level to be available at the meetings. An anonymous question/suggestion box was put in the faculty room to symbolize my commitment to listening to concerns –even from those

who might be reluctant to express them openly. After I addressed the first suggestion for toilet seat covers, teachers realized they could talk with me directly. The suggestion box was eliminated.

I held monthly meetings with representatives from each grade level. At faculty meetings, I encouraged teachers to express their needs and concerns, and I made sure there was follow-up, either by individuals or committees. Along with regular praise for teachers whose work resulted in our good test scores, I made it clear that I monitored test results and promoted teacher discussion about maintaining high performance. I was also very open with teachers about our budget – or lack thereof. Since the school's enrollment was lower than expected, we had begun the year in the red. I wanted the staff to understand that we might have to make budget trade-offs between supplies and staff development. For my own professional growth, I enrolled in Peer Assisted Leadership (PAL), a training for administrative support and collegial sharing.[1] I was ready to hear the insights of some more experienced administrators.

As that first year drew to a close, I wanted feedback. On an open-ended ten question evaluation form, I asked teachers to evaluate my performance as their school leader. The only criticism was that some felt I had too many outside obligations and thought that I should curb my activities. Since I've always been a busy person, I felt that this was not a problem.

CSLA Help

The next year, I enrolled as a participant in CSLA. A three-year program to help administrators learn strategies for educational excellence. The training was extraordinarily valuable to me. I was able to practice clinical supervision techniques and I learned new approaches to reinforce responsible behavior in the cafeteria and on the playground. I outlined a plan to share my vision with the faculty. I also applied to be a CSLA trainer of trainers for the second year in the area of *Increasing Staff Effectiveness Through Accountability*. Then, I put my training to work.

Mission Statement: At the first PTA and faculty meetings of the year, I gave an overview of school accomplishments and outlined the directions I hoped to take, I especially emphasized the need for partnership among students, parents and teachers. To develop a school mission statement, I had parents and teachers think about the ideal school and produce statements of what they wanted to see at ours. The fourth grade teachers liked the idea and added to my efforts by asking their students to write an essay about what kind of place they thought school should be. The first draft of our mission statement

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[1] PAL is a professional development program offered through Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

emerged from these activities. I was pleased with it, but found it fell short of the ideal statement that I had been trained to produce at CSLA. Nevertheless, I felt the process was so important that we adopted and published it.

Strengthening the Curriculum: We chose language arts as our focus for curriculum development. I was able to secure funds through an AB 551 writing grant for materials and release-time substitutes to enhance our regular staff development day. Teams from the same grade level worked together to draft an articulated language arts curriculum. Teachers also developed student and class books which were displayed during National Schools' Week at our local business mall.

Bringing the staff together to focus on one area paid off even more when two staff members organized a workshop to promote the development of literature kits using our core literature adoptions. The PTA supported the literature program with the purchase of two core books for each teacher. They financed the school's annual reading program, volunteered time for in-class work and monitored student home readings. Over the summer, the PTA launched a summer reading program which asked parents to purchase magazines for summer reading. Summer readers would receive prizes from the book company. I wore a T-shirt signed by all the students who participated to celebrate our successful program.

Professional Growth: During the end of the year evaluations, staff members were asked about their professional growth goals for the next year. These goals were then included as comments on their evaluations. Funds were allocated in the various budgets to support the training to fulfill these goals. Grade level teams determined how most of the conference money was to be issued. Others were determined by direct teacher request or administrative solicitation. The results were overwhelmingly positive, and teachers are now beginning to plan for professional growth activities that support the school and district curriculum goals.

Increasing Staff Effectiveness Through Accountability: I have tried to establish expectations and follow through with teachers by modeling, monitoring work and giving immediate feedback. I promote my theme–effectiveness through accountability – in team and faculty meetings, individual conferences, and daily classroom visits. It is a constant challenge to reward teachers equally.

Promoting a Positive School Climate: Since I firmly believe that the workplace should be a place you enjoy, I try to support activities that build relationships and foster interaction. For example: we now have a neat and orderly teachers room, and we celebrate birthdays and

other special occasions such as clerical week, day of the teacher, and classified day. We also select a student of the week and have monthly award assemblies, incentives for good cafeteria behavior, super class recognition, and "Responsibility +" tickets for playground safety to name a few. The cafeteria incentives have resulted in class competitions for points, where all classes within two points of the highest class are considered winners and receive treats. This has increased student participation in the program. I'm now evaluating our playground safety program and considering ways to improve teacher follow through on disciplinary actions and positive behavior recognition.

Involving Parents as Partners in Promoting Student Learning: Teachers consistently involve parents in monitoring homework, encouraging student participation in class and developing student recognition activities. One of our teachers volunteered to lead a workshop for parents on the math program's new manipulative concepts. This was so well received that we are planning a series of programs next year, since next year math will be our district and school curriculum focus.

How I feel about the results of my training

The application of my CSLA training has reshaped my thinking and procedures. It has made me more aware of needed changes, more tolerant of the slow process of change, and more understanding of the feelings of individuals necessary for change to take place. I realize that for administrators to be educational leaders, they need a wide variety of skills and strategies at their command. They must be flexible, open, decisive, and good facilitators. They have to first know their own vision and be persistent enough not to falter when encountered with elements of defeat.

I feel that I'm on a successful track. I met my initial goal of changing the image of the administrator with overwhelming success. I have now been on the job long enough to recognize the need to alter some of my initial emphases and delay implementation of others, so as not to overwhelm the staff with too many initiatives at once. I have learned that process is sometimes more valuable than actual results, and the act of working together is the key to problem solving.

II. CARRYING OUT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In this chapter, administrators write about various challenges they have faced as instructional leaders responsible for enabling the professional growth of individual teachers as well as establishing school level and district plans.

The narratives are:

5. Helping A Staff Member Grow Professionally From Mediocrity To Acceptability

6. Say "No" To Inferior Teachers

7. Tying Teacher Evaluation To Good Teaching Practice

8. Reflection Reveals Unexpected Planning Progress

9. Common Language, Common Knowledge, Common Goals For The District

HELPING A STAFF MEMBER GROW PROFESSIONALLY

From Mediocrity to Acceptability

After serving as a teacher for eight years in another school district, I, a single, black woman, received my first administrative assignment, a small, suburban school located directly across from a private country club. The school is considered a training ground for new administrators. It is felt that if one can survive this school, with its intense parental involvement and its "yuppie private-public school" reputation, one can survive almost anywhere. I am surviving, I am pleased to say, but survival has not been without its special challenges.

I have been working with a teacher whose reputation in the community was so poor that parents of students who have never been in his class move their children to private school rather than allow them to spend the year with him. They return their children to our school the next year. Integrating elements of different modules of CSLA training, I have been trying to promote his professional growth — both in instructional skill and basic public relations.

Fred has been a teacher here for many years. For at least ten of these, he has been the scorn of both students and their parents. Parents have complained about his lack of knowledge, poor classroom control, inadequate teaching skills, and insensitivity.

Students complain that he is boring, shows round-the-clock movies, gives too many dittos, and is consistently seen "picking his nose." Parents privately intimated that there must be something wrong with a man over 40 who has never married or fathered a child to their knowledge, lives in San Francisco, and occasionally exhibits "less than manly" characteristics. Fred claims that it is since I've been principal that he's been aware of such strong community dissatisfaction. With the exception of the previous principal and I, all of Fred's classroom observations and evaluations have been within the satisfactory range.

Within days after being named principal, I was confronted by several parents demanding that their youngsters be transferred from his class. It was very clear that my effectiveness as an administrator would be determined by how successful I was in getting rid of Fred.

Initial observations in his class showed me that there was some basis for their complaints. I found him to be weak in classroom control. There was a lack of established routines, especially during transition times between one subject and another. Students were frequently off task. In the area of knowledge and application of teaching strategies, Fred used too many dittos and audio-visual materials. He rarely gave students writing assignments.

In the area of motivation/student achievement, he rarely monitored corrected, or attended to the quality of student work, or to the completeness of assignments. Student attention in class was poor.

On the positive side, Fred demonstrated an ongoing willingness to participate in professional growth activities such as conferences, inservices, and classroom visitations. Even though there was evidence to support some of the parent claims, much of what they supposed was based on a reputation gone awry, exaggerated horror stories, and an extreme lack of respect. The staff recognized that Fred had problems, but tended to shelter him by rallying to his defense against parental complaints and administrative direction. Initially, there was a tremendous amount of distrust on their part towards my efforts to help Fred improve.

First Year Help

During the first year, I observed Fred as often as possible, providing positive feedback and suggestions. My goal was to establish rapport and trust in order to facilitate professional growth and risk-taking. I read his lesson plans each week and made comments, as appropriate. Whenever I received a complaint, I explained to the parents that I intended to share the matter with him, and I did. I always invited them to hold a three-way conference. During those meetings, I supported Fred in front of the parents whenever possible, not letting them attack him. In private, however, I was very direct with him about the changes I needed him to make and how we could go about doing them.

When parents came to me threatening to place their children in private school unless I "did something" about Fred, I told them that I supported their right as parents to do what they felt best for their youngsters. I did ask them, however, to trust me to do my job as an administrator to see that their students were provided a solid, basic education in a safe and orderly environment. That year, only two parents transferred their children.

During the summer of my first year, a parent group formed for the purpose of getting rid of Fred. They circulated a petition and sent a copy to me, the superintendent, and the Board. Several parents sent letters to the superintendent demanding he be fired. Each time these were routed to me without comment. In August, I asked Fred to come to see me before school began. I shared the petition, letters and complaints with him in the most professional, yet humane manner that I could. He cried. He asked me what he should do. I asked him to consider transferring. (Our district does not have an involuntary transfer policy.) I explained to him that he had three choices: continue to take the abuse; apply for a transfer; stay at the school, improve in the areas noted, and show parents that he was not as bad as they believed him to be. He asked me to investigate the possibility

of transferring, but in the meantime he was going to opt for staying and trying to improve.

I told him that I had invited parents to volunteer in his classroom, and I explained that I felt this would be one of the best public relations strategies he could use. Parents could see for themselves exactly what was going on and not rely on rumors. I also told him that the additional help would be beneficial in that parents could correct papers, work with small groups of students, and share areas of expertise (travel, art, cooking, etc.) with the class. He was reluctant, but I assured him that I would support him.

One Year Later

During my second year I taught a reading group in his class each day. I used this as an opportunity both to monitor what was going on and to do some modelling of appropriate instructional strategies. The fact that I was in there for 30 minutes each day placated many of the parents. Fred started to enjoy having parent volunteers in his room.

Even though Fred had major successes during the year, five families transferred their children to private school the next summer. Only one of these parents had ever had children in Fred's room previously. The other four knew him by reputation only. Fred began the next school year with only 15 students in his class.

During the summer, the letter writing campaign began again. This time I received a visit from the assistant superintendent. He wanted to know what I had done thus far with Fred. He asked if I could get Fred to consider a transfer. I spoke to Fred. He told me that he trusted me enough to do what was best. I suggested again that he strongly consider transferring. He agreed and said that he was actually relieved to be leaving. He felt that he was a good teacher and had taken enough abuse.

During the next school year, I continued to monitor and provide appropriate feedback. With only 15 students, Fred had an extremely successful year. He eagerly awaited assignment to a new school. In May and June, he went to three interviews for positions at other schools in the district. He was assigned to another school.

Because we were able to establish a solid level of trust, Fred was receptive to my comments and suggestions, and he made observable improvement. He began holding students more accountable for their work and provided more writing opportunities (weekly creative writing, journals). He drastically reduced the number of audio-visual materials and began grading and returning student work on a more consistent basis. He used parents as resources, assistants, and demonstration teachers. He provided students with more hands-on

science and mathematics activities. He still over-used dittos and there was very little affect in the classroom. His test scores were solid and I started to receive a lot less negative parent feedback.

Improvements and Transfer

Despite all of the improvement, three parents enrolled their students in private school for the upcoming school year. Fred asked that I not tell anyone about his plans for leaving. I respected his wishes. I was very pleased by the outcome. I had not expected him to improve as dramatically as he did. I had suspected he had the skills, but I did not think he had the desire to improve. His responsiveness to the different suggestions was surprising and encouraging.

One year later both Fred and I were transferred. I have been in contact with his new principal and she has related how well things have gone for him. They have been able to establish a certain amount of trust between them, as evidenced by the fact that he was chosen to be the grade level facilitator at this new school site. She is continuing to monitor him very closely on a consistent basis, but she has commented that he has been most responsive. Several staff members from the school have called me to tell me how happy Fred is since his move. They stay in contact with him and have commented that he couldn't be happier working at the new school.

I was disappointed that I was not able to sway parental thinking and support to a more positive degree. I have tried to remind myself that parents must be supported to do what they think best for their youngsters. I needed to do what I feel was best for the entire school — students, staff, and community.

If I were faced with the same circumstance again, I would probably do it the same way with a few fine tuning adjustments. This time I would try to do more cognitive coaching to help Fred become less dependent on my advice and more self-confident about his own judgement. My goal would be that he gain more ownership of the changes, not because of parental and administrative pressures, but because he actually saw a need to improve.

SAY "NO" TO INFERIOR TEACHERS

I was supervising in the yard on my first day as an elementary school principal when the district supervisor for elementary schools stopped by for a visit. The teacher on yard duty, a veteran, joined us, asking the male district supervisor, "Do you belong to her? You're cute!" Needless to say, we were both taken aback by this comment. I was to remember it frequently over the next few years.

The fifth principal assigned to the school in the last eight years, I am well aware that it is my job to ensure that students have effective teachers and that quality teaching prevails throughout the school. I became quickly aware that this veteran was not teaching her 30 third graders effectively. Classroom control was a serious problem. I even questioned her emotional stability. I wasn't the only one troubled by her performance. I learned that, prior to the school year, several parents requested their children not be assigned to her class. Since the beginning of the year, I had received several parent requests that their children be moved.

Teachers in the adjacent classrooms often called the office to complain about excessive noise in her room. Either the students were being too boisterous or she was continually yelling at them. Routinely during the day, the resource teacher had to take over the class while this teacher exited in tears. With her classroom discipline so out of control, I found myself suspending a large number of students to enforce our expectations for appropriate behavior. As a result, I had a high number of suspensions, a problem for me because suspensions at the elementary school level are watched closely.

In our district, principals have the option of submitting one or two written performance assessments for teachers who in the prior year earned a satisfactory rating. I chose to evaluate this teacher only once, and on the day of my formal observation, she received a satisfactory rating. However, my written concerns on the observation reporting form spilled over to a second page. I included major areas for improvement: respect for colleagues, modeling appropriate behavior, student safety and supervision, and classroom management. I recommended strategies for improvement like continuing to read and implement ideas from materials I provided her; taking courses on classroom management, student discipline, and improving peer relationships; and seeking ways to reduce stress that would not involve her students. I made certain that the teacher signed both pages of the evaluation, anticipating her dismay and a possible grievance.

Indeed, the grievance was filed. In conferences with me and with the teacher association representative, she repeatedly claimed the problem was that we had differences in philosophy. She declared that she was an outstanding teacher. The principal simply didn't like her.

Grievance Denied

She also observed that attending a course or classes would not be productive because all she would do was "look for a man to meet."

I explained that my expectations for her performance were the same as those for all teachers at our school, and that I had observed virtually no classroom management in her classroom. I gave some glaring - in fact alarming - examples: a student starting a fire in the class without the teacher ever acknowledging it; and students reporting up to thirty minutes late from recess with no reprimands or calls to the office. I told her I was not pleased that, in lieu of taking a formal class, she had chosen to complete selected readings. I assured both the district and the teacher association that my personal likes or dislikes were not at issue. Her grievance was denied. The evaluation stood as written.

I worried about the upcoming school year and how this teacher would fare in the "dreaded" third/fourth grade combination class. Yearly, the staff rotated teaching this class. They did not look forward to their turn on the rotation. The coming year was this teacher's turn, and staff felt strongly that she should take it. I agreed, in the interest of overall fairness and with a desire not to alienate the broad faculty group. Nevertheless, I worried about the decision. I considered the impact of a possible decline in the students' and the school's CAP scores, figures the district monitors very closely. Most of all, I felt responsible for the students that would be assigned to this teacher, some for a second year in a row.

Although tenured teachers are only evaluated every other year, I requested that the teacher be evaluated for a second year in sequence. She strongly disagreed and filed another grievance. When it came time for the personnel office to hear it, I refused to rescind. Luckily, I had had her sign both pages of the previous evaluation. She couldn't deny that I had expressed concerns. While the grievance was taken to Step II, the district personnel officer found no violations of her contractual rights.

I was determined not to carry any unsatisfactory teachers in my school. I was either going to help her improve or ask her to find another area of employment. That year, I evaluated her three times. In the pre-conferences, I prepared her by giving written expectations and information for improvement, including materials I had collected in my CSLA training. These expectations helped to define areas to be addressed and ensure "objective" rather than "subjective" observations.

As the year progressed, the teacher's evaluations were uneven. The first, on a math lesson requiring management of learning groups, was unsatisfactory. She did not request a post-conference. During the

pre-conference before the second formal observation, I explained my concerns from the first documented visit to prevent her from making the same mistakes. I was still hoping for improvement. This observation, a health lesson presented to the entire class, was satisfactory. At the pre-conference before the third formal observation, the teacher requested to know exactly what day I planned to visit the class because she needed to practice the lesson. As it was April, not September, I told the teacher that there were no rehearsals. The final observation, on a reading lesson, was rated unsatisfactory.

During this time the teacher's attendance deteriorated. She received three written reprimands and was suspended without pay for two days. The summary evaluation for the year was unsatisfactory.

My connection to CSLA peers was especially helpful to me during this period. Removing the teacher's name for confidentiality, I asked another CSLA - trained principal to read my evaluations for objectivity and clarity. I chose a principal who, having given an unsatisfactory evaluation to a teacher the year before, was experienced in the language of objective feedback. I also received support from the rest of the staff and parents. The latter took a strong stand, documenting their concerns with the class. All maintained confidentiality. I attended district in-services on legal issues and record-keeping. I also reviewed the CSLA module on *Helping your Staff to Grow Professionally.*

The district personnel office and elementary division staff provided direction and support throughout both school years. They responded quickly to my many phone calls to discuss incidents or review memos. They were always available to meet with me and paid attention to my concerns, noting in particular the large number of suspensions in her class.

Where will this teacher be next year? To date, although insisting she's an excellent instructor, the teacher has acknowledged that she cannot meet my expectations. The teachers' association has met with all concerned parties. We have agreed upon three options: the teacher may look for a less stressful assignment off site in the district's permanent substitute pool; take early retirement at the end of the year; or undergo another round of evaluations which will likely result in a recommendation for formal dismissal.

If the teacher returns to my school, I will continue to be in her classroom on a daily basis. She will be formally evaluated following contract specifications. Only time will tell what will happen. My approach to holding teachers accountable will remain much the same — continue to follow contract obligations, enforce the State Education Codes and keep the best interest of students as the ultimate goal.

The teacher chose to retire at the end of that year. Since this decision was made in the fall, she remained in my school for several months. I was concerned enough about the safety and education of the students that I formally requested she be removed from the school immediately, not at the end of the year. My request was not acted upon. I spent the year with one ear and one eye on her classroom every minute.

Postscript

The struggle was worth it. We now have an energetic new teacher in her place. The climate of the school has improved dramatically. I am amazed at what a difference the change in one staff member can make. We are now pulling together as a faculty team, with the ideas of all staff strongly valued. Would I take on such a struggle again? Absolutely.

TYING TEACHER EVALUATION TO GOOD TEACHING PRACTICE

As a teacher for nearly fifteen years, I was evaluated infrequently and saw little relationship between my evaluation and the tasks that I performed in the classroom. When I entered administration I saw myself changing into a building manager and budget expert, instead of the instructional leader I had hoped to become. I particularly wanted to establish a relationship between the evaluation process and teaching.

Our district has a certificated employee evaluation procedure, but having an approved standardized procedure does not guarantee having an evaluation that helps teachers think analytically about their work. Nor does it necessarily ensure positive change. In my first two years I tried several approaches with some success and some failures, primarily observing teachers and giving them feedback. I initiated a new evaluation process that involved teachers in identifying effective teaching behaviors and encouraged peer coaching and exchanges. Realizing this was a potentially explosive process, I decided to initiate it with probationary staff and phase in the program with tenured staff over the next year.

First, from a comprehensive listing, I identified effective behaviors and categorized behaviors into discrete areas. Each teacher selected a growth objective in at least two of the areas as the basis for the evaluation process. Second, I introduced teachers to the steps to develop an instructional plan. We agreed upon a common format. Each teacher selected two classes to plan for evaluation purposes. We held a conference prior to the beginning of school to discuss student course outcomes. They submitted instructional plans on a weekly basis. I then held at least four drop-in observations per teacher. An unannounced observation lasted from five to ten minutes followed by a positive memo or a conference if necessary. I held a minimum of two formal lesson observations. For these, teachers submitted lesson plans and objectives at the completion of the lesson. A conference was followed up by a memo. I stressed that the teacher identified growth objectives. Interim conferences were held as necessary with at least one for each teacher during the year. These focused on growth objectives, recognition of successes and direction for improvement. They were followed by a memo to the teacher. I held summarizing conferences after the completion of the first semester. I attached a follow-up memo to the district evaluation instrument.

With this process I achieved the following goals: There was a direct correlation established between the accountability process and teacher performance in the classroom. My evaluation and recommendations were based on observable identified behaviors. My personal power was greatly enhanced by modeling effective leadership behaviors. The unanticipated outcomes may have been more positive than the stated goals.

The board supported the process and elected not to re-employ two probationary teachers. This was a new precedent for the district. Teachers were impressed by the professionalism and thoroughness of the process that led to non-renewal of contracts. The probationary teachers formed a sub-group within the staff due to their shared experiences. As a result, they turned to their respected peers for advice, new ideas, and mentoring, which established some positive networking. They began to share a developed common vocabulary in the lesson plans and classrooms of other staff.

The receptiveness of the staff to inservice training has increased. The teachers have always received training well, but showed little movement to implement new ideas. With emphasis and direction for the accountability process, I find all of the faculty involved in improving teacher behaviors. My long-range goal is to involve all staff in the accountability process, emphasizing the follow-up conferences. This will support the exchange of ideas and focus teachers on student learning. This goal is obtainable. I know I have to keep my priorities clear. Certainly, I will need the support of the board and the strength to model that priority on a daily basis. I know the process works if I make the commitment!

REFLECTION REVEALS UNEXPECTED PLANNING PROGRESS

I probably wouldn't have gone any further with the evaluation of a series of professional development workshops I had helped plan if it were not for writing this case. But now that I've taken the time to find out what really happened as a result of my workshops, I'm glad I did.

I had been an elementary school principal for more than ten years when I received my latest assignment: to use the knowledge and skills I have learned through CSLA training to help our district's 16 principals and assistant principals improve their school's professional development program. The assignment was an outgrowth of the district's long-range effort to upgrade teachers' instructional skills in cooperative learning, mastery teaching, and critical thinking. We had decided that administrators would involve teachers in developing the specifics of their school plan, but all schools would focus on three areas of emphasis.

We wanted to foster cooperation, trust, openness to new ideas and willingness to learn new skills as the foundation of the plan. The district would cover the costs of teaching necessary skills. School administrators reserved SIP days, and the district provided minimum days to implement the plan. The catch was that administrators had no model for developing the kind of professional development program we envisioned; nor had we ever attempted a district-wide collaborative of such magnitude. Our goals were clear, but only a joint effort of district office personnel, site administrators and their staffs would allow us to attain them.

I determined that the *Training for Trainers* sessions learned in CSLA would be very valuable for the administrative team. Because this module focuses on adult learner characteristics, I thought it would give our administrators something tangible to use while developing their in-service plan with their teachers. Specifically, I was to help the administrators plan a presentation to their staffs that would explain the new program. All wanted to generate as much teacher enthusiasm and commitment as possible. At the August planning workshop, I discussed with the administrators adult learner characteristics, visual and kinesthetic learning and the use of charts, color and graphics. Small groups developed strategies for making presentations and shared them with each other. We also talked about administrators as role models for the enthusiasm, openness to new ideas, and risk-taking behaviors they wanted their teachers to exhibit. They saw that they needed to model the techniques of cooperative learning, mastery teaching, and critical thinking in their work with teachers.

I have worked closely with the administrators in my district for several years. We are good friends and we trust each other. Therefore, during all of my workshops there had been good-natured

grumbling about forced participation, and having to face difficult problems at the end of long, hard days. Nevertheless, the administrators were very cooperative and they gave enthusiastic evaluations of the workshop, reporting that the skills learned were valuable.

Several months after the initiation of the professional development program, all district teachers were involved in school-specific professional development programs. However, implementation was a problem. We still had no one successful model to follow. Schools varied considerably in their approaches. Teachers were uncertain of exactly what was expected of them and increasingly complained that whatever the expectations were, they were too much. We realized that three areas of emphasis might have been too many, and the numbers of teachers involved in each area was administratively unwieldy. Administrators were also uncertain how to make best use of their professional development resources.

I decided that the CSLA leverage point most useful for administrators at this time would be understanding how the various facets the school culture could enhance the professional development programs. I also planned to acquaint administrators with some of the latest leadership strategies which research has shown to be successful in affecting organizational changes. During one workshop session, we defined school culture. Small groups identified examples of each element from their own school cultures. We discussed strong and weak cultures and how the information could be used to improve the school professional development program. At the next workshop, we did a jigsaw with several articles written by well-known researchers from business and education on proven leadership strategies. This activity was a disaster. At 3:30 p.m., the administrators were not interested in sitting down to analyze heavy research articles and search for relevance to their professional development program. We struggled through it; they smiled weakly at me and left.

August planning time for administrators rolled around again. A year had passed since the introduction of the long-range professional development program. Progress had been made. Each school had developed a plan to increase instructional skills. Teachers had received inservice in the three areas of cooperative learning, mastery teaching and critical thinking. There had even been bright instances of creativity and cooperation. However, administrators felt that progress was sporadic and uneven. Teachers frequently grumbled about extra responsibilities and lack of time. We formed a committee of teachers and school and district administrators to plan the program's next steps.

I wanted to reinforce what we had learned

I decided to attempt again to present leadership strategies, but in a more meaningful way. I wanted to help administrators remember the relationships among factors closely related to student learning,

the instructional methods used in cooperative learning, mastery teaching and critical thinking. I prepared a large chart of the "Effective Schools Variables" wheel, with which most of the principals were familiar. On other charts I used graphics to illustrate connections between critical variables and the three instructional areas.

Previously, the administrators had bogged down in the reading materials about leadership strategies. This time, I briefly paraphrased the key ideas expressed by each author. I then found that I could group them into ten headings:

- honesty and trust
- group consensus
- skill building
- memorandum format
- positive reinforcement
- flexibility
- modeling
- meetings
- key values
- rituals

Starting with the first "big idea", honesty and trust, we brainstormed ideas and put them on a chart. I presented the CSLA technique of getting group consensus using eighth grade written language CAP scores. We broke into small groups to discuss other strategies and reported back to the large group. Although the administrators' evaluation of this workshop was positive, I was disappointed. I had hoped that some specific glitches in the program would become evident. While I had heard good ideas suggested, I never got the feeling that administrators truly felt they had solutions to any of the problems.

A year and a half after my initial presentation, I interviewed seven elementary principals and two seventh through twelfth grade principals and recorded their perceptions of what they had done. Six principals said they used team building skills and small group cooperative learning techniques during program review preparation. Four used charts and graphics for large endeavors, such as goal setting or planning a SIP program.

I decided to do my own research on the workshops' effectiveness.

Two principals used the effective schools variables wheel and other graphs for their opening school presentation and felt that these helped them integrate effective learning techniques into the inservice program. One principal had used the wheel extensively prior to my presentation and said it reinforced the concepts for him. All nine principals interviewed stated that the discussion on school culture gave them a greater awareness of its complexity. One principal said that it helped him to see in retrospect why some efforts had failed. Another reported that he was now more aware of school culture interactions involved in complex efforts such as developing the inservice plan and school-wide discipline policy, and reaching agreement on school goals. Two principals said they knew most of the material before the workshop.

I was surprised to learn that most didn't remember reading the research articles on leadership strategies. They thought they must have been absent for that meeting. Six of the principals used the consensus building technique with excellent results. Two had adapted it successfully to other areas. Three principals felt that the summarized list of leadership strategies was useful. They felt that it reinforced ideas and helped focus on ways to promote collaboration. One principal had worried that he might be overdoing the constant reinforcement with teachers while planning for a program review, but found that the total buy-in of staff and the joy of accomplishment expressed by teachers at the end of the program review validated the process.

In Retrospect

I was impressed that only twice during the follow-up interviews did anyone mention how ideas or strategies from the workshops pertained to their school's professional development program. There was probably not enough trust developed to allow the site administrators to analyze their situations honestly. District procedures have not always supported objective and honest analysis of problems followed by non-defensive discussion of solution strategies. Therefore, no one knew how to make a connecting bridge from generalities to the specific problems encountered at each school site.

While we had wanted broad teacher buy-in, it turned out to be the administrative team who decided on the program's content and process. Consequently, many teachers had not felt ownership. Most agreed on the need for improved instruction, but the specific techniques for cooperative learning, mastery teaching, and critical thinking were presented in isolation from broader curriculum discussions. The instructional skills were left dangling, rather than clearly shown to be effective means of reaching critical goals. For teachers, learning the new teaching strategies was simply an added burden. My data revealed that when the workshop processes and ideas were used effectively, it was because they meshed exactly with a current need, or because they could be used to reach clearly defined objectives.

Some principals were able to adapt the workshop ideas to their own situations very creatively. However, it is apparent to me that more methods are needed to draw administrators into the real problem areas and to encourage them to view workshops as the time to *do* actual problem-solving rather than just plan for it. We need more training in how to gather facts, dig deeper, separate the chaff from the grain, set priorities, and move from the abstract and complex to the simple and concrete.

In addition, administrators need more practice in thinking through solutions so as to consider all forces that could work counter to a proposal. We must also learn that it is all right to fail, especially if we

adopt a professional habit of analyzing results objectively and honestly and reserve time for follow-up and long range monitoring of the strategies we put in motion.

I have noticed a silver lining to the "making effective changes" cloud. During last month's administrative team inservice, I observed some significant changes in administrators' behavior. Because of continued district emphasis on collaborative decision-making, risk-taking, and vulnerability modeled by top management, administrators are becoming more open, more responsive to and appreciative of each other, and more willing to share problem-solving. After months of participating in small group activities, they are accepting this process automatically and focusing faster on the problem to be solved. I, in turn, have learned first hand the value of follow-up research and reflection.

COMMON LANGUAGE, COMMON KNOWLEDGE, COMMON GOALS FOR THE DISTRICT

It is the norm in many districts for teachers to attend staff development inservice programs continually throughout their careers. In fact, inservice attendance is often required for continual employment. Consequently, teachers are kept informed on the latest instructional strategies and research and have a common vocabulary of educational terms. This is not so for administrators. They do not routinely attend such programs. The resulting gap between teachers and administrators can lead to communication problems, fragmentation in program planning, and even misuse of funds due to a lack of administrative follow-through for program implementation. As a part of my ATC work, I have been delighted to be a member of the team that is helping one district develop a comprehensive staff development program that involves teachers, site administrators, district administrators, and school board members.

In this rural district of more than 3000 students in schools ranging in size from 10 to 500 students, nearly half the administrators and several aspiring administrators are CSLA participants or trainers. The district's goal was to have mission statements developed by all schools by the conclusion of the school year. As a part of our ATC follow-through support to the district, we met with the district's CSLA participants to offer assistance developing mission statements for each school. In evaluating their first year training, the ATC participants also wanted to share with their district the information in the curriculum, instruction, and professional accountability modules. Participants volunteered in teams to present the modules that they felt most comfortable sharing.

For new teachers, the district planned an inservice at the beginning of the school year to communicate district expectations and to provide a framework for evaluating new teacher performance. Instructional strategies, behavior management, and classroom management were presented. The terminology, research, and information from the CSLA Instructional Skills module formed the foundation of this inservice. The district has now ensured a common language, research, and knowledge base for both teachers and the administrators that supervise them. The new teacher staff development was not a one-day activity. It continued throughout the year with the district providing workshops based on their expressed needs as new teachers. Site administrators conducted the workshops with help from expert teachers.

This type of inservice is not only inexpensive, but also builds trust between administrators and teachers and gives the effective teacher an opportunity to mentor new teachers. It has also built a network of resources for the new staff members and communicated the district's belief that "We care about you as teachers and provide support for you so that you can do your best for the students in our district."

Administrators are viewed as instructional leaders. Communication problems between administrators and teachers have decreased. Using their common understandings and common language, administrators are able to provide viable feedback to their teachers on curriculum and instructional issues.

Professional development also extended to the top management team. They participated in a day-and-a-half retreat to develop a vision and a mission statement for the district. The district superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and the governing board attended. The regional ATC provided a facilitator on an outside consultant basis. The materials, concepts, and format of the modules were synthesized and adapted to facilitate a district vision and mission statement. The group was successful: we agreed upon a mission statement along with three strategic priorities for the governing board. The timing of the retreat was such that the school board vice president shared the district's mission statement and top priorities with the entire district staff at their opening meeting a few days after the retreat.

Not all Needs are Resolved

All professional development needs have not been resolved, however. Leaders are still grappling with the following questions: What staff development program is present for the tenured teachers? Since many new teachers have teaching experience in urban settings, how does the district integrate them into the cultural values and norms of the rural community? What is needed to sustain leadership to coordinate a comprehensive district staff development program of this scope? How do you convince a community that celebrates status quo to support on-going comprehensive staff development?

III. BUILDING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

In this chapter, authors share a variety of experiencesthey have encountered as they try to share leadership responsibilities with school staff. Staff teams take several forms in the narratives.

The narratives are:

10. Behind The Scenes: A Committed Team And Tenacity Can Make A Difference

11. Post-Strike Hard Times Lead To PAT (Participatory Advisory Team)

12. Building Staff Morale Helps Create A Positive School Climate

13. A School Climate Team At Work

14. School Site Training Teams Promote Excellent Instruction

15. Sharing Leadership Takes Time

16. New Committees Return An Air Of Excitement To Our School

17. Teacher Teams: A Process For Change

BEHIND THE SCENES: A Committed Team and Tenacity Can Make a Difference

Being female and working for a district office in a rapidly growing area has advantages, but being thought of as a possible administrator is not one of them. Where I work, the top administration is all male, and they seem to like it that way. However, a couple of years ago they uncharacteristically agreed to send me, a resource specialist with an administrative credential, to CSLA. I applied and waited anxiously to learn if I had been selected as a first-year participant. I was ecstatic when I received my invitation to join!

I was also delighted to find, at our introductory meeting, that CSLA's leader for our section was a dynamic, highly professional female. She was certainly different from our district's all-male top management. What a treasure! After seeing her in action, I felt that maybe there was room for a woman at the top.

In all, four teachers from our district were chosen to attend CSLA. We agreed to hold regular breakfast meetings to provide support for one another throughout the year, and invited the assistant superintendent, also a CSLA member at that time, to join us. We decided to make school climate our focus for the year with a special emphasis on increasing staff morale.

A Need to Attend to Culture and Climate

It hadn't taken many CSLA sessions to make us aware that the culture and climate in our district warranted attention. We lacked direction. We were not sure when or how decisions were made or what criteria were used to make them. Collective bargaining was tension-ridden, and the process fostered hard feelings long after negotiations were completed. Budgets had been frozen. In one school, two teachers were teaching two separate classes out of the same classroom at the same time. Morale was at an all-time low, especially among senior faculty.

During that first year, our CSLA team worked behind the scenes, giving positive support to staff who introduced new ideas for discussion. I was chosen to be on the mentor teacher committee and became the recording secretary. This proved to be one of the best positions to support the faculty because it allowed me to encourage innovative teachers to apply for mentor positions. Also, I had a say in who would be rewarded for extra work and for what kind of extra work. Others on our team sought out similarly strategic positions to foster dialogue among faculty about our shared values to bring about needed changes without forming divisive factions.

We were feeling very positive about the year and decided to introduce a new approach to collective bargaining. Traditionally, negotiation was seen as a zero-sum game. If we "won" they would have to "lose." The process was very confrontational. Consequently, even though the district would settle on a contract, it was not an

agreement anyone could live with for very long. Using our position power, we carefully introduced a "win-win" model to faculty and administration. Rather than make demands based only on faculty needs, we presented a proposal that included issues of importance to administration -- positions we knew about because of our increased contact with administrators throughout the year.

The strategy seemed to work. Faculty didn't get less than in the past, and we didn't just give in to administration demands. Administrators were more willing to accept our proposals because we were not simply making what in the past they perceived as selfish, one-sided demands. As a CSLA team, we were especially pleased.

Faculty morale was increasing. We were learning how to apply our new leadership skills and seeing tangible, positive results. But, as happens in the best of districts, people and policies change. At the end of the year, the administration decided to reduce financial support for CSLA training. Our assistant superintendent team member resigned from CSLA, and the amount of time the rest of us would be allowed to attend was reduced to five days -- down considerably from our first year. To continue with CSLA, we would have to use personal necessity leave or have the time taken from our sick leave. With initial success under our belts, we would not be swayed. All four of us decided to stay with CSLA at our own expense.

The "Us-Them" Situation Returns

Too soon, the "us-them" situation seemed to be returning. Without that first year with CSLA, we probably would have become resigned to this regression. Instead, we set out to re-build top management support for CSLA. At our advisory meetings -- the very ones in which we first learned of CSLA opportunities -- we re-introduced discussion of the training and its value and encouraged our administrators to attend CSLA's top management meetings. We also made sure to remind them of upcoming meetings and sent them information we thought might be helpful. Finally, we enlisted the support of our CSLA trainer to meet with our administrators.

In short, we persisted. Every time we had a chance to talk about CSLA, we did -- in the hallways, at meetings. Even social occasions were not exempt. CSLA was discussed over cocktails, at weddings and at dinner parties. By May of that second year nothing substantial seemed to have changed, then, toward the end of the month, one of the assistant superintendnts agreed that we could finish our leadership training under his administration. He would help in any way he could. We would be able to do the required CSLA project, and he would help us gain entry into any school in the district. Our tenacity and commitment paid off! Ah, the sweet smell of success.

As I look back over the last two years, the results of the work we did on culture and climate are positive. Collective bargaining went smoothly. Teachers and administrators interact more informally as well as in meetings. The dividing lines between administration and teachers are slowly dissolving. We see each other as real people. We have a new shared sense of direction and teachers have been more involved in decision-making.

What would I do if I encountered this same kind of problem in the future? I know you have heard the statement "Knowledge is power," but now I would say, "Shared knowledge is even more powerful." I would share what I know more quickly, both my ideas and my concerns. I would also listen carefully to what others are saying and try to work collaboratively. Most of all, I would persist.

POST-STRIKE HARD TIMES LEAD TO PAT (PARTICIPATORY ADVISORY TEAM)

Are participatory decision-making systems prone to sabotage? If a participatory decision-making system leads to a consensus which is obviously *un*representative, what do you do?

These are some of the questions I mulled as dean in my high school of over 2,000 students and 110 staff. I had been in the school over 15 years, four of those as dean, a role roughly equivalent to assistant principal. I served on the management team of the school along with the principal and two assistant principals. Among other duties, I was responsible for accreditation, the honors/advanced placement program, and staff development. I was determined to bring about a change in our archaic practice of having department head meetings serve as the sole forum for employee input in decision-making. This might have been construed as a group sharing leadership in the school, but in fact, long entrenched department heads had so long held their positions and were so resistant to change that they had earned the nickname "subterranean high priests."

Some school history may help explain my feelings. The school endured an ugly two-month strike four years ago. We received a two-year accreditation three years later, and at this writing are in tender negotiations to avoid another strike. There has already been an unauthorized walkout by 50 percent of the teachers, and a recall of the board of trustees is underway. The teachers' union specifically advised its membership against participating in our Effective Schools program, staff development, or any other effort beyond their statutory minimum. The current superintendent is being replaced. The staff is dominated by multi-decade veterans - regarded as "high priests." Into this dismal atmosphere comes me, an ATC optimist, fresh with bookloads of ideas on shared leadership.

Before the strike, I had presided over a modified department head meeting structure called a Curriculum Review Committee which included more than just department heads. We were able to effect many significant curriculum changes. Post-strike, the principal resumed the role of chair at what became traditional department head meetings, including only the 15 duly appointed department heads. Obviously, this format echoed the voice of most staff members on critical school issues. Even the accreditation team spoke to this in their two-year approval. So, following their recommendation, the next year the principal asked me again to preside over a modified group forum, the Participatory Advisory Team (PAT). We had up to 25 staff member participants.

PAT is a wide-open advisory group. We agreed to deal with the traditional department head business as well as a wider set of school issues. Meetings were open to parents, classified employees, employee unions, and students. We wanted to create the most encom-

passing arena possible for discussing school issues and forming recommendations for action. Certainly, we wanted to address the concerns of the accreditation committee that decision-making was non-participatory.

The Anticipated Elation

As anticipated, previously overlooked staff, parents and students feel included in vital issues involving the school. PAT has also served to mitigate extreme postures. The larger, more diverse group has "defrocked" some of the "high priests" who are now more broadly accountable for their rhetoric. With only one year of operation, PAT has had few unanticipated outcomes, and we met and exceeded many of our initial goals. We did not sustain the full initial membership of 25. Students and parents attended with less frequency toward the end of the year. Although the unions were offered a formal seat, they did not send a representative.

The record now shows a management team that has supported a consensus-generating forum. Helping PAT was the inclusion of our first-ever school based coordinated program for which three non-student days were set aside for staff development for all staff. As the coordinator of this program, I made sure that PAT held preliminary discussions about the process prior to the three-day workshop. I have also relied heavily on CSLA-acquired skills both in the design of the meetings and in diplomacy under heavy and sustained fire. For example, I always strategically seat the participants and conduct round-the-room consensus polls to make sure that no one individual or view can dominate the group. Slowly, a new "pecking order" is emerging among key actors on campus. In this strike-prone era, PAT is playing a central role in sustaining a positive school climate.

BUILDING STAFF MORALE HELPS CREATE A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Our Chapter 1 middle school is in a large urban city and has 800 seventh and eighth grade students. As the vice principal in charge of staff development and our incentives program, it was my personal goal to improve the school climate for our staff and, thereby, our students. The principal supported my efforts to motivate staff collaboration toward making our school a nice place to be.

Much evidence indicated low staff morale. The school was messy and overcrowded, with graffiti everywhere. The student population had doubled in the past few years, so there was little personal space for employees. There was little respect for our surroundings, teachers received little recognition for their services, and few awards or incentives existed for staff or students. Team work and social events were sparse, and collegiality was not readily apparent. Teachers had the attitude that "nothing will change." As I took on the school climate challenge, many complaints were directed to me.

I believe that for change to occur, the people affected must be involved. With this in mind, I formed an incentive committee to examine staff needs and set goals. Under my direction, the committee drew up an action plan which helped guide us throughout the year. Goals were set to improve our school climate by improving discipline, recognizing staff, expanding staff development, and increasing social activities.

I began by sending appreciation notes, offering private and public recognition, and making positive comments in our daily bulletin. Additionally, I improved internal communications by publishing agendas for our meetings, talking informally with teachers regularly, sending succinct memos, and asking for more teacher sharing at our staff meetings.

The incentive committee made many decisions that directly affected our workplace. We immediately started a "Staff Member of the Week" bulletin board, a special parking spot for the recognized staff member, lottery drawings at staff meetings, and recognition of our employees in the daily bulletins and the monthly parent newsletter. Asked to submit names of colleagues for these honors, staff did so willingly.

At the end of the first semester each staff member received a school pin. This was the most popular form of recognition. It contributed to new feelings of mutual respect and cohesiveness. Later on in the year, staff members were given personalized note pads and recognition certificates. Our administration supported our efforts by submitting names of several of our teachers for public recognition by our Education Center. I continued to urge staff to apply for special programs and grants. Several were successful.

To help classroom teachers and reduce their stress, we used a school-assigned substitute to provide assistance periodically. When possible, we reduced the number of students in some of the more difficult classes. Additionally, our discipline policy was rewritten with staff input and approval. Careful monitoring of classroom discipline and a commitment to a consistent school-wide discipline policy helped as did consistent administrative support for our team effort.

Our staff development program also progressed very well. We collectively set priorities and earmarked existing monies for release days for inservices, workshops, and classroom visitations. We also started a professional library, and administrators shared educational articles with faculty. We held a mid-year Saturday workshop that proved very successful in helping to refocus our priorities for the rest of the year. We continued to stress the positive. A feeling of ownership and camraderie had developed.

Teacher Reactions

At the end of the year, at a post-school workshop, teachers were asked: What have we done well this year? What needs refinement? What should be our goals for next year? They had many positive comments. They felt that the climate was better and that there was more support and cohesiveness among the staff. While all concerns hadn't vanished, the faculty began to see itself as a whole team.

Some very good practices resulted from our year's work. New leaders with positive fresh ideas emerged. Teachers began to recruit other teachers and to show a sense of pride in our teamwork. I am happy to report that the coming year brought more good ideas and prospects for an even better school climate.

A SCHOOL CLIMATE TEAM AT WORK

I work in a three year old special education program designed for youngsters with serious emotional difficulties. In the first year, the former director was to upgrade the facility, hire staff, and secure training for them in the systems to be used to encourage appropriate student behavior. The second year I was invited to become director, while my predecessor assumed the newly created position of part-time executive director.

During the first year the director invited me to spend a day at the school. I was then site administrator of a program that served as this school's prototype so I was familiar with general expectations. My day there was enlightening, if not prophetic. I spent time in classrooms, saw an assembly, had lunch with staff and sat in on a teachers' meeting. I also learned that the third of five classroom teachers had just announced she was leaving. I sensed problems and tensions. Staff was cautious and tight. Still, when the board offered me the directorship in the spring, I did accept. I began work in August.

My first responsibilities included helping to hire new staff. I now know how lucky I was to have selected new staff as I set out to change the school's tone and decision-making processes. Returning staff, while highly committed and knowledgeable, were wary and frustrated. Teachers were not sharing with each other. Casual conversations during breaks rarely involved those outside the classroom. To touch base with staff I went to them; few were coming to me. In our faculty meetings, speakers looked to me for non-verbal signs; insecurity ran rampant. I learned that while the previous administrator had wanted to involve staff in decision-making, it rarely happened. Also, follow-through about students was an issue for our staff and for the residential agency with whom we worked closely.

Unclear about what was wrong, I navigated the first few weeks on intuition. I consciously set out to raise staff morale and to have staff feel my commitment to really involving faculty in decision-making. We began to have weekly general staff meetings with notes kept. Any staff member could add to the agenda. Chairmanship rotated among staff, as did note-taking responsibility. Several staff members felt reluctant to chair, but once they did it they found they could handle it well. This not only boosted confidence but developed new skills—a side-effect I hadn't anticipated.

We had routine meetings of the core classroom teachers, again rotating responsibilities. I met periodically with the part-time staff and with instructional aides. The minutes from meetings were kept in notebooks in the staff room so that anyone can read them For initial meetings, I supplied a goodie to go with the coffee. Now that responsibility too rotates. Our secretary put together a birthday list, and we

remember each other with cards and flowers. I instituted giving a rose for special staff efforts and now peer acknowledgements have increased. I see this as a "best test" of the effectiveness of my morale raising campaign. And I was gratified to hear that when a visitor commented on our school's warm feeling, a teacher said, "This year, we're also taking care of each other."

Looking Back on the Problems

It wasn't all smooth going. My first true test came when I had to fire an instructional aide hired eight weeks earlier. First I had to convince the teacher with whom he was working that the aide couldn't do the job. Since two staff members had been let go the year before, the staff felt insecure. Many felt that the earlier dismissals were unfair and unfounded. I decided that even though the aide was probationary, I would document how I arrived at the final decision. In the end, the teacher agreed with both the process and outcome. Moreover, I learned that the deliberate and fair process also calmed the school secretary who had been afraid of losing her own job. As she saw us proceed carefully, her apprehensions lifted and her trust increased.

By spring we were "rolling along." We had four very active curriculum task forces on which all faculty members participated. To make decisions about special programs for students who need more reinforcers and structure, we developed a team process involving the school, home, and therapist when appropriate. Discontinuance, changing, and modifications, are all approved by the team.

Nevertheless, I felt as if I were still the pivotal person for "climate control," and that function kept me from getting to other areas that needed attention. Just in time, my ATC introduced the School Climate Team (SCT).

Establishing the School Climate Team

SCT is a way to further involve the faculty in determining problems and ways to solve them. It can also increase peer-to-peer acknowledgements and de-emphasize administrator involvement. But did we need to establish another team? How would the people be chosen? If the staff chose, how would I ensure that the right people were selected? Could I "stay out of their hair" and let them do their job, as we were told we needed to do for an SCT? Did I even want to relinquish the responsibilities? Could I trust the SCT not to go too far into the administrator's realm? Because I wanted this faculty to be truly empowered, I decided to take the risk. But how would I get this going?

I learned in my first job that if you want a meeting to go a certain way, you plant some seeds with key participants ahead of time. So I talked with my management team plus a couple of teachers. The management team includes our school psychologist and lead counselor, who have several administrative-like responsibilities and serve

as principal in my absence. They thought the SCT would be a great extension of processes already begun. But who would have the time? And could they really do anything more? The two teachers had similar concerns. But maybe, they thought, this was a way to get some things out into the open and resolved. Not incidentally, it could save me from having to trouble-shoot.

Prior to the first meeting with the whole staff I distributed informational materials. I asked people to think about what school climate means to them. At the meeting, we divided into groups. Each group was asked to define school climate. Then we had open discussion about the feeling tone of the school and why this was important. I wrote all of the input on a large flip chart which remained in the faculty meeting room so that anyone could go back and re-read.

The next session focused on the issues of school climate at our school. There were tickler ideas (from ATC material — thank goodness for that material!) Again the large group was divided into smaller groups, each having a separate area of focus. All contributions were put on our flip chart and clarified.

Keeping the faculty on task was challenging at times, but by and large we succeeded. It helped that we held the meetings before school, since that clearly limited our time for lengthy discussion.

Prior to our final session, SCT guidelines were distributed again. The session focused on coming to consensus, summarizing issues and developing a ballot. We reviewed the responsibilities of the team, I clarified my role, and we firmly decided that we wanted to try a SCT. We then solicited volunteers. Luckily, a counselor, a teacher, and four instructional aides volunteered. The group decided to have just one person from each professional group, so, we choose one of the four instructional aides. The faculty decided on the total number of people, etc.

Ballots were distributed. Results were not announced until all ballots were in — a stipulation I made during our meetings. It was important to me that all faculty participate in this selection. To my relief and delight, the three people chosen are respected, liked, and trusted by their peers and by me. The SCT has met several times. They distributed a survey to hone-in on priorities but it was not as helpful as we had hoped. I suggested that they talk to people individually or in small groups. This is yielding better results.

So far, we have had two problems to solve jointly. The first occurred when the SCT placed a "suggestions" can in the faculty room to solicit anonymous ideas. They got two angry notes both written by the same person. I knew who it was, but what to do? They were

unsigned. I decided with the SCT chair that the team needed to handle this. Ironically the chair also recognized the handwriting. The person was a member of the SCT! The notes were formally referred to me, but the team handled the issues. I felt as if a test had been passed!

The second problem involved a minor gripe from staff tea drinkers. The result was a small adaptation to our water cooler so that the tea drinkers could have instant hot water. SCT asked for $200. I allocated $150 with the possibility of more towards the end of the year if the budget allows.

Though our SCT has been operating for less than six months, I see benefits. I don't think the team is being utilized fully yet. For now, I am content to take a backseat to their activities and deliberations. How long will they go? That will be up to them, primarily. I anticipate that we are in this for the long haul.

Postscript

We are in the second year of a new SCT. Membership has more than doubled. That team has chosen to focus on areas which are different from the first team based on their assessment of the needs of the program. Consequently, the dynamics are different, but both teams have been important in improving school climate.

School Site Training Teams Promote Excellent Instruction

My school is one of nine K-7 elementary schools. We enroll approximately 600 students and employ a principal, 21 full-time teachers, and six additional specialists. I am the vice-principal/ program manager.

Cooperation between our students, staff, parents and community is high. We are committed to providing a positive educational experience for each student. However, we are continually challenged to sustain teachers' commitment to using a variety of teaching strategies year in and year out. New ideas might be discussed, even tried for a day or two or unit or two. But eventually, a favorite style of instruction will take over for a teacher, and she or he will use it in every circumstance, regardless of its appropriateness. As a vice-principal, I was determined to challenge our routines.

Regularly, our district has tried encouraging teachers to learn new skills and apply varied instructional strategies in their classes. But staff training was always planned and delivered at the district level. A few individuals would be trained in a practice then expected to conduct follow-up training and supervision at their respective school sites. We decided to take a new approach: school site training teams (SSTT), under which site administrators and site teacher teams plan and conduct professional development. I played an active role in putting our school's team together.

The team approach has served us well. We have been able to provide relevant professional development for the school staff, supervise follow-up and monitor implementation, assist in weekly scheduling of planning and feedback sessions, and provide direction for future planning. The team concept insures that both administrators and other staff members have input. The original team included the principal, vice-principal, two teacher facilitators (released by substitutes from their classrooms one day per week) and a district staff development unit member assigned to the school one day per week. Team composition has changed each year. Currently, the two teacher-facilitators have been replaced by teachers who either volunteer or are recruited by the principal. This has allowed broad teacher participation over time.

In operation, the team receives teachers' recommendations for professional help on forms periodically submitted by teachers. The team determines how best to meet the request for help, and help sessions are scheduled on a master chart in the faculty room. Typical services requested are: demonstration lessons, helping developing of materials, teaming and planning release time, and time for classroom observation and grade level meetings. One snag, initially, was an emphasis on preparation of materials rather than instructional practices. We actively lobbied for more emphasis on classroom-centered issues, and

teachers responded with requests for more substantive instructional help. On the whole, the team professional development strategy has been extremely well received. I have been pleasantly surprised at how well the SSTT concept has helped me in my role as an instructional leader.

SHARING LEADERSHIP TAKES VALUED TIME

The teaching staff at my school had always been close, sharing materials and ideas as well as friendships. However, decisions were generally made by the administrator and communicated to the staff. This system worked fine on the regular measly budget, but life became more complex when additional funding necessitated our developing cooperatively a comprehensive school plan. In fact, the staff split almost 50/50 on whether or not to accept new monies with these budget "strings." I had some questions about the potential divisiveness of the process. Most of all, I wanted a work environment for teachers that was characterized by high performance, cohesiveness, trust, satisfaction and mutual support.

We found a way to accept the money and are now glad we did. It forced us to develop a quarterly program evaluation process. Each quarter, a representative group of staff members are released from their duties for one day (using substitutes) to evaluate the entire school program and plan for the next quarter. Five committee members, either alone or with principal, parent or other staff help, collect necessary data about the various aspects of program we are reviewing, develop a plan for continuation and/or refinement, and make recommendations to the entire staff. The Review activities are varied throughout the day. Teachers are engaged in brainstorming, reading and sharing research, discussing, analyzing data, and writing to keep the day interesting and stimulating. Most teachers find themselves as tired at the end of a quarterly evaluation meeting as they would be as if they spent the day teaching.

The result has been buy-in to the concept of shared leadership with teachers making programmatic recommendations to other teachers that are grounded in a thorough understanding of program and its relationship to our overall school mission and goals. Next year,we plan to have each member of the quarterly evaluation committee also serve on our other site committees, so there will be a direct link to the planning process. But, thanks to a funding requirement, a process for shared leadership is in place.

NEW COMMITTEES RETURN AN AIR OF EXCITEMENT TO OUR SCHOOL

My junior high school is large – more than 2,000 ethnically diverse students. When I joined CSLA, it was a school in trouble. We had a very high rate of absenteeism and tardiness – among teachers as well as students. Teachers made excessive disciplinary referrals to the office. Far too many students were failing, and well over half failed to maintain a C average. The majority of the parents work long hours, so we had minimal parent input. But we knew parents were looking to us for help.

As assistant principal, I knew these conditions were unacceptable. Thanks to CSLA training, I also realized I had some leverage to make needed changes. Not all parents worked all day. Many were potential sources of support for change. We were ready for a schoolwide mission and goals. I also needed to work with staff on their professional growth and, by doing so, strengthen the curriculum.

I set about to make changes. I established curriculum, school program review, and discipline policy committees to do a needs assessment and to formulate policies and procedures to address our concerns. As a result of the committees' work, we initiated the following: principal's honor roll tea, perfect attendance program, referral room program, monthly departmental display spotlight, peer counseling program, and a staff development program conducted by various faculty members who had expertise in targeted growth areas.

Focusing on specific goals and objectives identified by the broad school community resulted in a strengthened administrative support team, a tremendous increase in student, parent and teacher involvement in the total school program, and an increase in feedback and suggestions for further refinements of our programs by teachers and parents. Both groups are now far more willing to sponsor school activities. Student attendance has improved as a result of our perfect attendance incentive program, although not yet to the extent we are striving for. Our teacher union representative is spearheading a discipline committee project, meeting with teachers and parents over the summer to build on our successes and to find more ways to make the school a better learning environment. Parent volunteers are now visible and plentiful in the school. In general, an air of excitement has returned. Thank you, CSLA, for the information and support I needed to get us focused on learning again.

TEACHER TEAMS: A Process for Change

The school is a comprehensive multi-ethnic inner city high school of approximately 2,800 students with a staff of 120 teachers, seven counselors, three vice-principals, an assistant principal, and a principal. I was a vice-principal in charge of instruction and guidance. The principal instructed me to develop and implement a process to become a more effective school. The school was overcrowded and staff and students were beginning to feel the effects of this condition. The school was ready to take a look at itself to see if we could eliminate some problems and become more effective.

I realized that several leverage points applied in our school:

Establishing Your School's Mission and Goals

Promoting a Positive School Climate

Helping Your Staff to Grow Professionally

Enhancing Student Success through Positive School Climate

Shaping the School's Culture to Promote Student Learning

Our school district featured a speaker who discussed the elements of effective schools and a process for identifying problems and working on solutions. The elements of an effective school were presented to the site council. The site council identified the following five elements as goals for the school year:

1. High expectations
2. Positive school climate
3. Safe and orderly environment
4. Dedicated and qualified staff
5. Clear school mission

The faculty and administrative staff completed surveys dealing with these five goals. The surveys were prefaced by a discussion of the school goals, effective schools and the need for evaluation of the school. The staff was divided into twelve committees of approximately ten individuals each. Each committee included an administrator or counselor. At least one faculty member from each department served as a chairperson. (Department chairpersons were not allowed to be committee chairpersons.)

The staff met in the auditorium as a large group, where general information was given. Then, the groups met in different areas of the auditorium to discuss lists which included five concerns taken from the surveys. The task was to discuss and prioritize the lists of concerns. The groups met a second time in classrooms. Prior to both meetings, the chairpersons were given information sheets to record information. They were instructed to discuss implementation methods to deal with their concerns.

Administrators and counselors took the suggestions offered by the committees to develop a plan to deal with our concerns. Their plans were discussed with faculty at institute meetings. The staff monitored the implementation of the plans. Six groups were assigned, to work on a different concern dealing with our goals for the school. The groups met on a regular basis in order to evaluate progress and modify the implementation of the plans as needed.

The process has enabled the school to deal with concerns immediately involving the whole staff. Individual staff members were expected to keep informed concerning the workings of all of the committees. The action's of each committee were distributed to the whole staff each time the committees met in order to keep everyone informed. I coordinated this process from beginning to end. I hoped to give the staff ownership of the process as we all progressed toward the realization of our goals–more successful students. The staff felt that they were involved in decision-making and moving the school in a positive direction to meet our goals. I was amazed at the ownership that the staff felt when they had a part in the process. I had not anticipated the degree of cooperation we attained or the degree of isolation the staff sometimes feels when they are not well informed.

The Importance of a Strong Instructional Leader

I was pleased with the results of this action because the initial goals were met. The importance of having a strong instructional leader who is willing to empower others is an essential ingredient if goals are to be reached. A team effort helps communication and creates a supportive school climate. After I started the project, I began to realize how important a positive school climate is having more successful students. The isolation that staff and students sometimes feel can be a great deterrent to success.

I believe that this process would benefit most large inner city schools. Communication in large schools is usually a problem, so ways of producing better communication and involvement by the staff are important. High expectations are a must in inner city schools since many students are capable but not motivated. Since both students and staff function better in a supportive environment, I would initially concentrate on creating a positive school climate. The next steps would be to analyze and revise the curriculum as well as use test data to improve instructional programs.

IV. STRENGTHENING THE CURRICULUM

In this chapter, administrators write about various challenges and successes experienced as they tackled the thorny job of bringing about curriculum change in schools.

The narratives are:

18. Comprehension Takes Wings Through Whole Language Instruction

19. Benchmarks In Curriculum Planning: Introduce The Concept Early

20. Grade Level Budgeting: An Incentive For A Stronger Instructional Program

21. Collaboration Between Departments Takes More Than An Administrative Edict

22. Developing An Integrated Literature-Based Language Arts Curriculum

23. Empowering Teachers To Improve Instruction

COMPREHENSION TAKES WINGS THROUGH WHOLE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Our elementary students consistently demonstrate mastery of phonetic skills on norm-referenced tests but perform much more poorly in comprehension skills. From year to year, staff discussed our concern over these differences. We regularly agreed to emphasize strategies and materials that would improve comprehension, but each year the data told us our students still had not made significant improvement. Not surprisingly, we realized that the tests were telling us what we spent most time teaching. Phonetic skills made up a major portion of the curriculum, and we spent considerably less instructional time developing comprehension skills. Yet, even though we knew we needed to reverse our emphasis, we were not quite sure how to proceed. So we looked to a committee.

The reading committee met to clarify our objectives and outcomes. They planned staff inservices teaching higher level thinking skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy. We held four inservices over two months. However potentially valuable, the activities were repetitious. Staff became bored and lost interest, but they still recognized that students' comprehension skills needed to improve.

As one of the instructional leaders in the school, the staff's problem was mine as well. Remembering CSLA's module on *Creating a Vision for Instructional Excellence,* I created a vision of how a successful program might appear when it became a reality. I asked myself: How will teachers feel about what they're doing? Will students radiate with eagerness and enthusiasm as they're involved in the classroom activities? How will the classroom environment feel when this enthusiasm for learning is present? How will I gauge improvements in staff morale? How will others "see" my vision in action? These questions helped me through many moments of frustration over the next few months.

I learned of a week-long summer seminar on how to integrate language, reading and writing instruction to provide both basic skills development and problem solving experiences. When I asked teachers to attend with me, several seasoned ones as well as some who had only been teaching a few years volunteered. What a change it made in our work! We gained a tremendous amount of insight into how to integrate the various areas effectively and left filled with enthusiasm and hope. I was still worried as we discussed our next steps, wondering if this would again be something used only by one or two, to be put on the shelf by the others to try "at a later date." My worries were unfounded. Teachers were committed to trying the new techniques.

At the first staff meeting after school began, teachers who had attended the seminar explained how literature motivates reading and thereby serves as a vehicle to encourage learning in other subject areas. Their message was clear. Literature is an ideal vehicle for

teaching students to think. After years of frustration, the staff felt excitement! We agreed to observe the teachers' classrooms to see the new integrated approach and whole-language philosophy in action.

Small Steps but Large Impact

We had hoped for such a reaction and had collaboratively planned our course of action. We would take small steps to implement the new approach. Literature would form the core of our program as set out in the state's *English Language Arts Framework*. The basal texts would be placed "on the shelf" but would remain available to allow teachers to check that the skills taught through literature were in alignment with the basal. We agreed that each teacher, with my help, would design a curriculum plan to identify the objectives and outcomes to be gained over a two-month period. The plans would incorporate an end product that students would produce so that teachers could assess successful mastery of the concepts.

We decided I should give parents a general overview of our program changes at the back-to-school night assembly. Classroom teachers would follow with information about how the whole language approach had been adapted in their particular grade level. Teachers had already agreed that, since the whole language approach would use instructional strategies other than the usual popular dittos and workbooks, parents would routinely receive samples of their children's work demonstrating how the same academic skills were being covered in our integrated literature program. As the pilot teachers of the program, we met monthly in a support group to share ideas and clarify problems.

The gains were overwhelming! Students who in the past had shown no desire to learn were responding with enthusiasm and success. Teachers' enthusiasm was spreading through the school. It helped that we asked the consultants who conducted the seminar to come to us for follow-up training. Their visits provided us with classroom demonstrations followed by question and answer periods. After school, they gave a presentation to the entire staff on theory and application of whole language. This reinforcement was an unmitigated success!

Teacher workroom conversations were now filled with lively discussions about new instructional strategies and results. We developed schedules to allow for more teachers to observe one another's classes. Requests for additional literature classics grew along with interest in attending related seminars.

For their formal district evaluation, several teachers chose to teach a whole language lesson even though they felt they hadn't yet fully mastered the newly learned techniques. I was more than thrilled at their willingness to take this risk, realizing most teachers only teach a lesson they know to be error proof. Staff morale was growing!

Support for the Whole Language Approach Grows

So was parent support. At the end of the year, I was amazed by the numbers of parents who wanted their children assigned to teachers using the whole language approach. Typical comments: "My child blossomed this year," "Jamie has never shown much interest in reading. Now she loves to visit the library," "My child really enjoys going to school now."

Our school has become a model for the district. Visitors regularly come by for ideas about how to get a whole language program underway. Students are beginning to critique a work of literature with an ease I wouldn't have felt possible a year ago. We know it may be too soon for standardized test results to show gains, but we are convinced beyond doubtthat we are building a stronger curriculum for our students.

BENCHMARKS IN CURRICULUM PLANNING: Introduce the Concept Early

At my large urban high school, most teachers taught straight from texts, using end-of-chapter questions for review and testing, then plodding on to the next chapter. Classroom presentations varied little, as well. I had learned about broad-based curriculum planning in my ATC and was extremely interested in the possibility of employing some of the ideas in the science curriculum, especially the concept of benchmarks. Teachers heard my presentation about the broad-based curriculum planning approach and benchmarks. We agreed to pilot the planning process with two new teachers, one in the first and the other in the second year of teaching. Both were open to new techniques.

Initial results were mixed. Teachers did not fully comprehend the difference between benchmarks and unit tests and were attempting to develop a benchmark for each lesson within the unit. Both teachers also placed the benchmark after the unit examination rather than before. I met with them to review the approach and make suggestions.

The pilot lasted for several weeks. The teachers began to notice a difference in student comprehension of concepts and in writing in the classes where benchmarks were used. One teacher commented that a student who had failed the unit exam on the cell could now construct a model of it with 100% accuracy. He had used a bowl of jello with the bowl representing the outside of the cell, the jello representing cytoplasm, an orange for the nucleus, marshmallows to represent other parts of the cell, and spaghetti to represent chromosomes and ribosomes. The teacher was greatly impressed by the student's explanation of the project to the class and decided that placing the benchmark before the exam might have helped this student earn a much higher score.

The second teacher used a modified version of benchmarks, combining the unit exam with it. The exam asked students to use playdough in groups of two to model the six stages of cell division. Using their desktops for display, the students used four different colors of playdough in creating models. This cooperative, tactile learning provided a striking reinforcement of the subject matter. Students' mastery was significantly higher than in previous units.

The teachers' successes did not automatically spread, however. Some who have been teaching for 10 to 15 years were very resistant to changing their teaching strategies. They only reluctantly agreed to use benchmarks in their teaching, and exhibited none of the enthusiasm of the new teachers. These more experienced teachers reported the benchmark approaches were time-consuming and claimed it had little impact for their students.

I disagreed. In classroom visits, I found that students who used the benchmark before the unit exam were more confident both of their comprehension of subject matter and of their work in general. So, we shall continue as a department to incorporate the broad-based curriculum approach, but I know it will be a slow process. Considering the resistance I encountered in trying to change ingrained practices of more experienced teachers, I hope teachers are exposed to this approach during their preservice training.

GRADE-LEVEL BUDGETING
An Incentive for a Stronger Instructional Program

What was once a simple "Let the district pay for it," attitude on the part of teachers in my school has changed to a more thoughtful "Can I or we afford to do this using our budget money?" Teachers are also more aware of what happens in the classroom next door or down the hall and share use of the more expensive equipment and instructional materials. They even share field trips. These changes are the result of a grade-level budgeting system I initiated. The changes did not materialize overnight.

My school is the only one serving a large rural region comprised of diverse small communities. Historically, small one- and two-room school houses dotted the region, but they have since been consolidated into the current unified district, although not without considerable resistance from residents who did not want to lose local autonomy. During the 1960s and 70s the region had an influx of anti-war activists, urban drop-outs and individuals committed to communal living. These newcomers continued in the tradition of local ownership of school programs. By the late 70s they had won enough seats on the school board to establish an alternative education program. A turbulent four- or five-year period followed as the community became divided over new approaches to education.

At one time the school was essentially three schools in one. Shortly after the formation of the alternative classrooms, parents with an opposite schooling philosophy pressured the school board to allow an A+ educational program, a back-to-basics, no-frills approach to schooling. These parents gathered around them a select group of what they considered A+ teachers. It was not long before those teachers who were neither alternative or A+ acquired the tag "regular."

It did not take the community long to realize this was no way to operate an effective school. The regular teachers, program and students had no strong constituencies and were left to fend for themselves, in particular on instructional program priorities and necessary budget allocations. Morale was low. Staff wasn't working together.

As happens, priorities shifted again. Within a few years the A+ program disbanded, leaving a regular school and the alternative program. As a teacher on the staff since 1977, I had been a part of the various swings in educational philosophy and school board directions. I became a principal in the district shortly after we had returned to one regular school program and an alternative school. I wanted to build a stronger sense of shared community among our staff. That, to me, meant I needed an organizational structure that would encourage teachers to routinely talk with one another about students and programs. I had tried a grade-level budgeting plan at another school, so, with the blessing of my district superintendent

and the school board, I set into motion the decentralized school budget process.

The Former Budgeting Process

Traditionally, the site administrator controlled school funds. Teachers would come to the principal with spending requests to purchase consumable materials and textbooks, arrange field trips, and attend conferences. Faculty would engage in long discussions over competing priorities for site spending. Meetings would bog down in complaints about the extensive use of and damage to the copy machine. "The district should pay," was generally the faculty response to projected cost overruns. Staff saw no bottom to the general fund pot. Moreover, items routinely purchased by the district were not valued or seen as important additions to the school program. With no incentive to share materials, teachers stockpiled supplies. Purchasing negotiations carried out between the principal and an individual teacher fostered the perception that there was disproportionate spending within the school, with some favored programs or favored teachers receiving funds regardless of competing priorities.

In this context, I began my grade-level budgeting strategy. I started by asking that substantive curriculum planning discussions be held in grade-level meetings. As in many schools, teachers didn't talk with one another about their programs. They had little or no understanding of what was happening in the room next door, working more like independent contractors than a team of teaching professionals. Nor did we have in place a process for evaluating grade-level programs in relation to their effectiveness and relative costs.

The grade-level meetings helped teachers begin to see areas of common concern and helped them to talk about priorities rather than defend program turf. They also began to talk openly about how program plans were embedded in budget decisions, and voiced renewed commitment to setting school budget priorities. Old habits and alliances die hard. In practice, teachers exhibited little buy-in to our final budget decisions. Staff still would approach friendly administrators and favorite school board members with their own special budget requests, as if some other pool of money existed that would supplement the amounts discussed during priority-setting discussions. So prevalent were teachers' special extra-budget requests that, at the time of my suggestion to adopt grade-level budgeting, I think the board would have tried just about any approach that would have stemmed the special request flood.

The Grade-Level Budgeting Plan

The grade-level budgeting approach does not take a great deal to set up. School board and superintendent support is basic. Next, a formula needs to be created to generate funds by grade level. Working with the district's business manager, we divided the funds allocated for the school's 4,000 to 6,000 categories and lottery money to each grade level based on the projected ADA. I provided all teachers

with copies of the budget amounts and asked them, by grade level, to put together their own budgets. Immediately, teachers became engaged in substantive discussion of programs and priorities and necessary resources to support their various programs. They roughed out grade-level budgets and discussed the rationale for their spending requests. This stage of the process they took very seriously.

Teachers fielded questions from one another and the principal regarding the relative merits and value of their requests to the overall educational program. An observer might have easily confused teachers' discussions with those of a school board trying to balance the budget. Once grade-level teams agreed on allocations, they sent purchase orders to the principal, who, with grade-level team input, had set aside budget reserves to account for as yet unanticipated instructional needs.

Results of the Grade-Level Budgeting Process

Initially, grade-level budget balances were calculated by hand. Now, the district's business assistant provides monthly printouts. With the technology now in place to purchase copy machines that track individual usage, each staff member is now charged for actual use.

Teachers now have an understanding of what happens in the classroom next door or down the hall. They talk frankly with one another about their programs and related resource needs. They also have a greater reason to share resources to keep the costs down.

Teachers plan common field trips to spread costs of bus rental. They weigh requests for major purchases, with teachers in different grade levels now sharing costs of the more expensive equipment. In negotiating this shared cost, they also talk more with one another about their work.

A specific example comes to mind. The local Rotary Club offers free swimming lessons for second grade students at a local YMCA pool. The only expense to school districts is the cost of transportation. I asked second grade teachers if they were interested in participating. Their initially quick "yes" changed to a long discussion of the value of the program after they learned that the transportation to and from the pool was to be paid for from their grade-level budget. In the past, when the district general fund picked up the cost, teachers actively lobbied for this program. Now they had an urgent need to review the program's value.

The ensuing discussion was a valuable give-and-take among the teachers -- the type an administrator would like to hear more often regarding the value of a particular program. Eventually, the teachers agreed to pay for transportation, but they did so only when convinced that the swim program was beneficial to the students.

We had some unanticipated outcomes. Some staff members were nearly paralyzed when it came to spending funds. School budgeting in general and costing-out classroom materials and supplies was a mystery. Others voiced a concern that the process and the responsibility for filling out purchase orders and planning the respective budgets was an administrative task. Both groups were looked on with astonishment by colleagues eager for this kind of shared leadership. They readily offered to help those reluctant to spend funds. Of particular pleasure to the superintendent and school board, the continual parade of special funding requests ended.

Certainly, there is still room for refinement in our grade-level budgeting plan, but I have been encouraged by its success. I am convinced that by involving teachers in budgeting decisions, the instructional program of a school is enhanced. Most important, teachers' strong commitment to this critical planning and program review process is healthy for the children, the organization and the individual teacher.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS TAKES MORE THAN AN ADMINISTRATIVE EDICT

Our staff had been feeling frustrated about our junior high students' persistently low CAP and CTBS scores, particularly in the social sciences. Because competency tests do not test for content area knowledge, students and parents seemed to believe these courses were less important than the basic "reading, writing and arithmetic" skill classes. Getting students to complete and turn in homework assignments in social studies had always been a problem. Students' grades reflected the low priority of this subject in their lives.

Out of frustration over our failure to tackle this curriculum problem, our principal announced to the staff that he was requiring every student to turn in a term paper that would include library research. The papers were to be completed within one month, and it would be up to the English and social science departments to see that the assignment was completed satisfactorily. English teachers would teach research procedure and report structure. Social science teachers would teach the content – one topical area for seventh graders, another for eighth. The principal's intent was to push teachers into working together to get students to focus on social studies.

Our teaching staff is strong, with eight mentors for more than 20 teachers. Most of us have been at the school ten years or longer. Because we were used to sharing decision-making with the principal, we met this edict with resistance, reluctance, and even anger. No time had been allotted for the collaboration, and no one seemed anxious to proceed.

Needless to say, teachers' attitudes carried over into the classroom and students were generally negative toward the assignment. Begrudgingly, teachers and students completed their respective assignments. The principal concluded belatedly that the negative effects of his actions on both staff and students far outweighed any knowledge students might have gained by writing the paper. One teacher who harbored hard feelings requested and got a transfer to another school at the end of the year. Three years later, the incident is still mentioned in the staff room.

The year after the principal's edict, we were still frustrated over the social studies issue. As a mentor and as one of the social studies teachers, I decided to try a less directive approach to the problem. I remembered from CSLA discussions that curricula that are well-aligned increase the probability that students will learn. Since most teachers at our school were used to planning their daily lessons in isolation, our curricula were not likely to be aligned. I suggested to one of our English teachers that we might collaborate, and we agreed to do so. I gave her copies of what I was teaching in social studies each week, and we began to independently develop lessons that were compatible in content and skill between our classes. Films, literature,

and plays that complemented historical studies enhanced our students' understanding of otherwise vague concepts and events.

I also began to post the content areas that my classes were studying each week on the staff bulletin board. Then, I asked each English teacher if the information was useful to them. They all agreed that it was, and one said he incorporated the information in his lessons. I shared my strategy with the other social science teachers. Interest grew. Occasionally, the other two social studies teachers added their weekly content plans to the staff bulletin board. English teachers agreed to give credit for any papers or essays written for my social science classes, as I did for theirs. We also rewrote our school level competency tests to include social science and science content.

There are probably several reasons why this collaboration was acceptable, while the principal's plan was roundly rejected before. First of all, the idea came from teachers. It hadn't been laid on us by "the boss". The initiators were recognized teacher leaders of the staff–one taught in both departments. The school had a tradition of teacher collaboration within departments, so the shift to collaboration between departments was more readily accepted. Teacher participation was voluntary and teachers define the terms of their collaboration. We also saw results. The quality of student work improved dramatically when students found out that they could get double credit for their efforts. More students began completing and turning in their homework.

The cooperative planning concept was extended during the following school year to include the entire social studies and English departments for Chapter 1 classes, and we plan to add the science department next year. Now teachers work more cooperatively toward shared goals because we began letting each other know what we were doing in our classrooms. One previously burned-out, cynical teacher seems to have somewhat renewed his enthusiasm for teaching. At the beginning of the second year of official collaboration, previously cynical, older teachers began to notice the improvement in the eighth graders who were in the collaborative program the previous year. Best of all, student CAP test scores have risen dramatically, and our school has received an exemplary school award. All of these events are not exclusively the result of collaboration between English and social studies teachers, but that was the first innovation to occur and other changes were closely related.

Not everyone is happy about having to be more open and accountable. There is still a great deal of griping in the staff room. But through it all, our principal has remained enthusiastic about our efforts. When he saw our plan was getting results, he supported us and provided us with materials, substitute days to enable teachers to

plan cooperatively in interdepartmental teams, and encouragement for our efforts to build an open, supportive environment. He was also willing to admit that his original plan had not worked. It has become clear to me through this experience that a change needs to be "owned" by those who are most affected by it. It also takes time!

DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED, LITERATURE-BASED LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

We are part of a district staff development team that was charged with developing an integrated, literature-based curriculum for our district's GATE program. Approximately two-thirds of our elementary GATE students are in special day classes at five magnet schools; the other third are grouped into clusters at their home schools (most of these clusters within each class are quite small, most with fewer than five students). Cluster teachers and special day class teachers needed a complete literature program that would encourage higher-level thinking and provide for at least 200 minutes of differentiated instruction.

There was also teacher dissatisfaction with the cluster classes. Cluster teachers had become increasingly frustrated since special GATE classes were instituted six years ago. They felt the district decreased time, money and materials for their cluster program by funding the special classes. Moreover since many of the teachers no longer readily chose to be GATE cluster teachers (the annual placement decision is often made arbitrarily by administrators), they frequently felt ill-prepared and unsupported. The language arts program, then, was to provide some commonality across the two kinds of classes.

The program was to do the following: integrate skills of reading, writing, English, oral language, and listening; align content with district and state proficiency and competency standardized tests; incorporate both cognitive and effective levels of questioning and thinking; develop end results and benchmark products to measure levels of understanding; include a variety of authors, genres and settings; and use a set of developmental and sequential themes for each grade level one through six.

We used the California's *English-Language Arts State Framework* as the basis for starting. We realized that teachers would need to change some of their teaching techniques in order to use literature instead of basal texts as the major portion and guiding force of the reading program. We had to help teachers understand that literature is not, by nature, a paper and pencil task. Lively discussions help students interpret and understand what is read. We felt the key to our new curriculum would be the questioning techniques which we would recommend. Teachers would use direct instruction, but emphasize inquiry, group discussion, cooperative learning and brainstorming. The objective would be to teach students to feel comfortable, think clearly and use valid reasoning in response to a question, relying on their life experience or that of someone they know or have read about.

We conducted preplanning: we analyzed district and state standardized proficiency and competency tests; identified benchmark products, end results, and basic skills (reading, writing, listening and

speaking); at each grade level developed a questioning format (cognitive and effective); organized a sequence of themes and genres; determined a logical flow of content; and selected four special class teachers and two cluster teachers to write curriculum and provide inservice for the rest of the GATE teachers.

We did the following planning: chose selections with a variety of authors and settings; developed rubrics for questioning, writing, listening and speaking; wrote curriculum for each grade level; shared, revised and edited; then published the newly-developed curriculum. Postplanning included the following: we inserviced teacher-users and site principals; provided ongoing opportunities for feedback; periodically met with teacher-users to offer support in implementing the program; revised, rewrote and refined the curriculum; reflected upon delivery to teachers, success of implementation, and what additional inservice and support would be needed.

Some of our outcomes were anticipated. We now have a high quality reading program that offers students exposure to literary works from different time periods, countries, and authors. Students are prepared for state and district standardized tests. All areas of language arts are incorporated in the curriculum in a fabric of learning that unifies reading, writing, listening and speaking. There is a synthesis of experiences under a central theme. By following the curriculum, students will develop solid reasoning and thinking skills for decision-making. The curriculum focuses on the processes of language along with the content.

Unanticipated Outcomes

We also had unanticipated outcomes. Growing frustration over the cluster group classes and general reticence about the need to implement a new language arts program led to a variety of responses, ranging from enthusiasm and eagerness to reticence toward the feasibility and relevance of such a plan. Many administrators and most GATE cluster teachers were unfamiliar with the components and requirements of the new framework. Consequently, the new curriculum contained some surprises that needed explanation. When teachers followed the specific suggestions in the new curriculum guide, they used an increased repertoire of teaching strategies (cooperative learning, inquiry method). But some expressed insecurity because they felt they did not have sufficient knowledge, experience and/or support in these new methodologies. Teachers and children increasingly accepted the notion that there could be many appropriate responses to discussion questions rather than just one right answer. Many however, remain insecure with a curriculum plan that offers no correct answers. When teachers relinquished their dependency on basal texts, they broadened their use of instructional techniques. But many became quite frustrated with the management complexities of two distinct types of materials—the literature-based program for GATE students and the basal text program for other students.

Although the content of the language arts curriculum was generally accepted in concept, we were surprised by some teachers and administrators resistance to the program. Based on our experiences we would recommend a number of modifications to the implementation process. Appropriate staff members, including principals and other instructional leaders and teachers should be involved in assessing what particular skills are needed at each grade level as well as in the choice of literary selections and lesson formats. The information gathered from this needs assessment should then be used to create the benchmark products and end results. This would more fully involve the cluster teachers and their evaluators and would result in more teachers feeling ownership of the final curriculum.

Analysis of organizational norms using such measures as R-FIT and C-BAM would prepare a foundation for teachers and administrators to accept and successfully deliver the new language arts program. More time, money and personnel must be included to support all phases of the program. The six curriculum writers were given five weeks during the summer to develop the entire year-long language arts program for all elementary grades. Teachers and principals received a half-day large group inservice on program content and a half-hour small group follow-up meeting at the school site. The costs involved, not including materials, were for the six writers' summer work and for half-day substitutes to release cluster teachers during the initial inservice.

During a major curriculum change, staff development should be greatly expanded to prepare and support the teachers and administrators implementing the program. Professional development needs to be initiated, encouraged and supported so that program implementation is seen as feasible and effective. For our district, areas of focus might be efficient management strategies, cooperative learning, and inquiry instructional methodology. On-going teacher assistance should be an integral part of the implementation plan. Use of mentor teachers, demonstration classrooms and/or lessons, and individual conferencing and peer coaching are some of the methods which could be used. Involvement of district and site level administrators and instructional leaders must be sought in every phase of implementation.

EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

There is a great deal written these days about empowering teachers to improve instruction, yet little is said about exactly how to accomplish this. In working through the problem, I am constantly aware of the conflict between letting teachers do things their way and encouraging them to conform to my ideas. What I want to lay out is not so much a sequence of steps or events to emulate, but an approach to consider. I will share how I went about working with teachers over a two-year period and discuss my role as energizer, catalyst, and yes, even manipulator.

My school is a large, old urban high school serving approximately 4,000 students, grades nine through 12. Our year-round calendar makes communication with the faculty difficult as there are only two days in the year when the entire staff is on campus. All physical facilities are limited and over-used, including classrooms, parking, restrooms and eating areas. Though our state CAP scores are below average, the school consistently tests above its band. The school receives no Chapter 1 funds. Two years ago, I was assigned to be assistant principal. Having served for a short period as a teacher here, I knew the school and its faculty.

When I arrived, the English department was in the doldrums. The chair, elected by teachers in the department, told me that the teachers were unhappy and unwilling to do anything extra. He said that it was difficult to find teachers for the senior writing classes. Although everyone was expected to teach reading and remedial classes, they weren't pleased when their turn came up. Talking to them individually, I felt many teachers were close to burnout. During one lunch discussion of excessive textbook losses, for example, they vented years of frustrations about the choice of texts. The ninth grade anthology, in particular, was "the pits."

My administrative charge was to implement the core curriculum program. To do so required that we buy books based on district and state recommended literature selections. I believed that change would be good for students, but it didn't look like I was going to get very far. The department chair felt that the teachers would not buy in. He was especially concerned about forcing all teachers to teach the same pieces of literature. We both knew that individual teachers had favorite authors and literature selections.

What Types of Leverage Should I Use?

As administrators, we sometimes pass off decision making to selected teacher leaders under the guise of promoting collegiality and empowering teachers. But it was clear to me that I was not going to be able simply to tell the department chair to put a core literature program into place. Like many secondary departments, this one was a fiefdom, with only loose allegiance to the school's visions and even to its own elected leadership. My goal was for teachers to be enthusiastic about their work, feel in charge of the instructional program and

be willing to put energy into improving what they did in their classrooms. Most of all, I wanted them to capture some of the enthusiasm I felt for the new approach to curriculum. I wanted their energy channeled in a specific direction.

To make the needed changes, I needed a cadre of English department leaders, so that teachers themselves could become the catalyst for improvement. Realizing that empowerment comes from shared decision making, I needed a way to give teachers control over something. That something, I decided, would be budget. Teachers involved in the spending process might feel more ownership.

The English department actually had many financial resources: an instructional materials account, an authorized textbook account, and lottery funds. There was also money for staff development. I tried to enlist the help of the department chair, but he was reluctant to spend department money. I then tried to get a committee of teachers to work after school selecting new books for the core literature project. After several months, I found that they were not making any progress. In fact, one of the teachers told me that discussions centered on how much they'd be paid for the project. So much for empowerment.

Time for Another Approach

I decided to be more directive. I called the department chair into my office. From the authorized list for each grade level, we identified some titles of core literature that we thought the department should use. He was still reluctant to make the decision, so I prepared a list of selected titles and invited every teacher to review it in my office during their conference period. Not only did I receive valuable feedback concerning which books to buy, but I had an opportunity to conference individually with each member of the department about what he or she wanted to accomplish. When the department elected a new chair at the close of the year, I shared this information with him.

The new department chair was delighted to learn of the many sources of funds. I encouraged him to find out what the teachers needed and to place a supply order. By the time the supplies arrived, he had won total teacher support. They saw him as a "take-charge" kind of leader. When the first core literature books arrived, the chair saw a need for supplemental materials and selected tapes, teaching guides and films to accompany each book. The teachers decided they wanted teacher kits for at least two titles for each grade level. Those were immediately purchased.

I'm seeing some payoff. As this school year began, these teachers are showing much more energy and enthusiasm. While I could have simply purchased new books myself, I think the extra time and effort were well spent. Teachers now own not only the budgeting and ordering of textbooks and supplies, but also instructional excellence.

Two years ago, my principal gave me a flier describing a Chapter 2 grant of up to $70,000 to improve writing skills in a content subject area. She felt we could win the grant. I saw this as a way to fund some curriculum development and to foster some leadership outside of the traditional department structure.

And There's More

Over a weekend, I wrote a preliminary outline for the Chapter 2 project with a focus on ninth grade English and sent it to our district grants office. Using the possibility of funding under the grant as a lever, I approached one of the English teachers with my ideas. I knew him to be an excellent writer with a doctorate in English literature who enjoys planning curriculum. Agreeing that ninth graders could handle more difficult and challenging materials, he worked throughout the spring to develop and prepare the grant proposal.

Our project was funded in July for one year. We had built several teacher incentives. Those working on the curriculum would not only be paid but would have the use of a computer and printer at home. We had plenty of volunteers for the project writing team, but writing progress was slow and fitful. Because the teachers' approach was not one I had originally envisioned, I had to remind myself constantly that I was not the classroom practitioner — the approach must be the teachers', not mine. I continued to encourage the teachers to try the materials out in their classrooms and give each other feedback. At several points, I thought the whole thing was going to fail. But it didn't. In fact, what they developed is different from any material I have seen for the English classroom - and quite good. The materials are now almost ready to be disseminated to other ninth grade teachers.

The project turned out to be a perfect vehicle to develop teacher leadership. The materials work, and we now have some teachers who were not part of the original team using the lessons. Teachers have ownership — at last.

The job is not finished, nor will it ever be. As I begin my third year in this assignment, I plan to continue to encourage the department to refine its core literature program. I also see the need to provide professional development for the department's leaders in the areas of teacher empowerment and collegiality so that they can continue to build upon the foundation that's been laid.

I am left to wonder how I would have involved teachers in curriculum improvement if we hadn't gotten the grant. Further, can these teachers continue to work together even if there is a change in department leadership or administration? How can an administrator get the teachers to foster their own leadership development? Indeed, in this work, we are life-long learners.

V. *RECOGNIZING STUDENT STRENGTHS AND NEEDS*

In this chapter, administrators reflect on a range of concerns relating to how students might be better involved in and/or served by schools.

The narratives are:

24. Hot Weather Brings A Lesson In School Climate: Involving Students In Decision-Making

25. Teachers' Choice Student Recognition Program

26. Student Partnerships Bring Success For At-Risk Youth

27. Alternatives For At-Risk Eighth Graders

28. Building Student Morale Through Positive Reinforcement

HOT WEATHER BRINGS A LESSON IN SCHOOL CLIMATE

Involving Students in Decision-Making

When our high school opened several years ago, it was the new school in a district with one other high school established at the turn of the century. I was the vice-principal of discipline, attendance and student activities, when I learned this lesson in decision-making. Our school board felt that the first year of operation was not a good time to revamp existing district procedures, so for us they adopted whole-cloth the procedures in place at the other high school. This decision became the focus of a great deal of debate and dissension at our school.

Demands for Dress Code Changes

Students are always sensitive about what they can wear to school. In the late 1970s, our high school district instituted a dress code. The decision was made by the board and administrators but had the blessing of the faculty, who felt that the students needed to be more regulated. The weather is very hot in the beginning and ending months of the school year. Even though the high school is completely air-conditioned, students felt it unfair to have to suffer by not being able to wear shorts at those times of the year. In the spring of 1985, pressure began to mount to re-examine rules of dress. When the weather began to turn warmer, several students, with the backing of their parents, wore shorts to school to test the system. At first, students were reprimanded. Their parents were called, and they were forced to change into appropriate dress. Students who continued to violate the rule were suspended.

Other schools' policies were fueling the demands for change. One of our feeder elementary schools decided to allow students to wear shorts. Three area high schools outside our district did also. Our students were increasingly vocal about our unnecessary restrictions on choices of warm weather clothing. As the principal and I walked about the school grounds, students would stop us to ask the inevitable question, "Why?" We began answering this several times a day; and when the answer we gave was unsatisfactory, students pressed the issue or commented about the inappropriateness of our stand.

Dress code discussions filled our student council meetings, the students strongly favoring a change. Eventually -- perhaps inevitably -- the student council drew up a proposal for change. I received instructions from the principal to convince students that there would be *no* reconsideration of the rule on shorts. I felt conflicted. It seemed that we might make some adjustments in the dress code without altering student attitudes toward education. However, I was well aware that it was my responsibility to carry out the directions given to me by the principal.

Not surprisingly, other staff were drawn into the issue. Teachers were required to confront a student each time he or she challenged

the rule by wearing shorts to school. Sending a student to the office would often spark debate in class, as well as in the hallways or the locker rooms after school.

We Involved Students In Planning for Code Changes

Part of the philosophy of our district is to teach students that change is possible through the process of discussion. We emphasize a process for change through the proper channels. The faculty, therefore, directed students to talk to the administration and to go through the student council if they were serious about a dress code revision. When teachers learned that the students had unsuccessfully attempted that route, they advised the students to put together an *ad hoc* committee of interested and articulate individuals to approach the administration. They indicated to the students that teachers also had some reservations about the total ban on shorts, if guidelines for the length could be agreed upon by the administration and the students.

Encouraged, the students pursued this strategy. They asked for a meeting with the principal and me to discuss revising the rules. With the end of school five weeks away, we hoped to postpone a meeting, assuming that students' interest in wearing shorts would diminish over the summer. They persisted, however, and received an appointment with the principal. Beforehand, I met with two of the student leaders and advised them to appoint no more than three students to be spokespersons for the full *ad hoc* committee. I also advised them to plan in advance what they wanted in the way of changes, to be ready to discuss how their plan might improve the school climate, and suggest ways students themselves could help implement and govern the new rules.

At this stage we were not considering involving other groups who might have a vested interest in the decision. We met with students and listened to their concerns. They were well organized and articulate. The principal and I were favorably impressed by the proposal. We set up another meeting to discuss the issue further. Discussing the dress code change in depth, the principal and I were beginning to feel that the proposal was worth a try.

We Decided Not to Bother the Teachers

Our school usually makes a strong effort to consult the teachers or their representatives on most matters affecting them, even those changes occuring outside of the realm of negotiations. It is our philosophy to be open and democratic and encourage participation of our staff. We also have many informal lines of communication with our teachers. Our offices are located in the same building as the faculty room which most teachers enter by a hallway that goes through the middle of the administrative offices. Many staff members stop by daily to talk about everything from how the fish were biting on the lake last weekend to problems with difficult students.

No More than Five Inches Above the Knee

Not surprisingly, many of the staff had talked to us about students' mounting concern over the dress code. However, the thought of involving teachers in the committee discussions did not seriously cross our minds. The principal and I felt that it was a decision which could be made without troubling them. A memo to the faculty with a description of the changes seemed sufficient. Thus, teachers were omitted from the discussion that led to changes in the dress code permitting wearing shorts if they were no more than five inches above the middle of the knee. We seriously underestimated the need to involve teachers in the dress code decision.

We announced to parents, teachers and students the official day for the dress code change. The first morning under the new regulations, the office was filled with students sent by teachers who were unwilling to make judgments on appropriate length. Other teachers sent students to show their pique at not being involved in deciding the final rule changes. Still other teachers chose a passive approach. They wanted to see what colleagues were going to do.

Problems surfaced at the district level. Neither the principal nor I had felt it necessary to discuss the dress code changes at a district level, other than to inform the superintendent and the other principal that changes were forthcoming. Wrong, again. Within our district, students go back and forth between the two schools for various elective classes, and summer school for all students is held on the older campus. While we had made it clear that the other school's dress code applied to our students while on their campus, pressure was beginning to mount at the older campus to change their dress code, too. Discussions at the administrative council meetings began to focus on the awkward position the changes had placed on the entire district.

In the meantime the old saying, "Give an inch, they will take a mile," began to take life on our campus. Daily, students were testing the new guidelines with outfits far shorter than the five-inch rule. With no buy-in to the changes, teachers left the administration alone to deal with the dilemma. We were busier enforcing the five-inch rule than we had been maintaining the original guidelines. Pressure from the district was growing more intense, and the new era of more liberal dress code standards was losing ground. Students who had worked so hard for change were becoming increasingly disturbed by their fellow classmates. The original student committee was called in for talks. We all decided it was time to return to the original dress code standards. The teachers received an announcement that beginning the next fall, the original dress code would be back in effect.

The many lessons we learned that year have helped guide our process of change. The principal and I did find positive elements in the situation. Working with the students in a diplomatic and team-

Thinking Back

building manner was a delight. When there were violations of the dress code, a significant group of students was as upset with the violators as we were. I had not experienced to this degree the desire of students to work with administrators on common rules of conduct anytime during my previous four years.

The fact that two groups worked so well in designing a change was a strong and positive indication for future action. When we learned to identify and involve all interest groups in problem solving, the shared decisions generated mutual ownership. We also learned that, while it's faster to make change when you only involve two constituencies, in the long run a slower, more inclusive process is likely to be more successful. I now think very carefully about the composition of committees when important changes must be considered.

TEACHER'S CHOICE STUDENT RECOGNITION PROGRAM

As an assistant principal in a junior high school, one of my major responsibilities is to ensure a safe, orderly, and positive environment for students and the instructional staff. I felt we needed a better way to honor the students who do so well at school. It's not that we didn't have high expectations for them. We had a traditional student recognition program, a Student of the Month, but I wanted to honor the many, not the few. We had in place three rights: 1) All students have the right to learn. 2) All teachers have the right to teach. 3) Everyone has the right to be free from physical and verbal abuse. When disregarding these rights, students are counseled to make some type of behavior change.

Because I use a "manage-by-wandering-about" style, I have contact with many students each day and know that most are doing a terrific job of honoring our "rights." I wanted to make sure they knew we recognized and valued their good behavior. These are the students who are doing their best to improve their academic skills, practicing good citizenship, showing a growth of self-concept and participating in class activities.

My first step was to convince the rest of the staff. The principal and counselors were supportive and suggested the PTA as a partner to pay for student rewards. Next, I met informally with key teachers to explain the program, pointing out the benefits of large numbers of students being recognized for their positive attributes. To set the stage for my presentation to the faculty, I sent a memo to all outlining the program. At the meeting I explained it in detail. They liked it.

Rewards for the Many

We named the program Teacher's Choice. It works this way. Each month teachers and other staff are given ten tickets. From each of their classes they award a Teacher's Choice incentive ticket of recognition to a boy and a girl who they think are modeling our rules. We collect the tickets and enter award winners into a computer program that records the name, grade and number of times nominated, alphabetizes the names, and prints grade-level lists. The lists are posted in showcases around school. About 200 students are nominated each month. Once a month during a lunch period, two student body officers and I run the drawing, picking eight lucky winners from each grade. The drawing draws a crowd. We post winning names, announce them in the daily bulletin, and use the occasion to encourage students to begin preparing for the next month's drawing. The posted names also draw a crowd.

We decided on prizes that do not cost a lot of money, usually month-long privileges of one kind or another. For example, one prize gives permission to enter the front of the lunch line for a month. Another is to be excused from school five minutes early to catch the bus for one month. The program has received good reviews from students and staff alike.

As I watch the students at school, most are having a good time. They enjoy their classes, teachers, friends and programs. The Teacher's Choice recognition program confirmed my belief that most are doing a good job at school. Now the school has a way of telling them so.

STUDENT PARTNERSHIPS BRING SUCCESS FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

My middle school was asked to pilot a class called "Seek Out Success," developed for students identified as potential dropouts. We have long been concerned about the problem and welcomed the chance to try a new approach. Typical of a California school, our students are ethnically diverse, a mix of white, Hispanic, black, Indo-Chinese, Asian, Filipino and other cultures. One hundred twenty of the non-white students are bused to the school to participate in the district's voluntary ethnic enrollment program. These students' families are economically similar to those in the school neighborhood, hard working middle and lower middle income families. Ninety special education students are enrolled in the learning handicapped, deaf and hard of hearing, orthopedically, and severely handicapped special education programs.

"Seek Out Success" had been designed to increase students' self esteem, and help them develop study skills and learn ways to improve interpersonal communication, under the assumption this approach would lead to academic and behavioral success in school. Included was a unit on career awareness to help students understand the kinds of skills and attitudes necessary for successful employment and to show the range of options available with increasing levels of education.

The district provided course material, funding for field trips, consultants, and personnel support. We received a go-ahead for our special education resource teacher to use one of her class periods to teach the class. She was eager to pilot the class and had a track record of success teaching students with special needs. With help from the counselors, she selected as the first pilot class approximately 20 students who had poor attendance records and/or were experiencing academic failure. To participate, students had to give up an elective class for SOS. Parents were told of the purpose of the class and invited to give input and attend parent information meetings. But few joined us at meeting time.

The class got underway. While students did participate fully, they did not seem to develop the connectedness to the school often found in more successful students. We tried a different approach -- a peer tutoring program that teamed SOS students with others in the orthopedically and severely handicapped programs. This effort was far more successful in developing that sense of connectedness. SOS students began to develop a sense of responsibility, pride in their partner-student's achievement, and a feeling of value because they were helping someone else. Working with others who were challenged physically and/or mentally helped SOS students recognize their own positive qualities rather than dwell on the misfortunes they had encountered. Their attendance improved. They were clearly feeling better about themselves.

The class was a success and adopted for district-wide use, with modifications. Although 90 percent of the students had passed their academic classes (D- is a passing grade), we concluded that they could have been even more successful if they had received instruction in a small group setting. We were able to staff for small groups the next year. Budget cuts made it necessary for the district to withdraw funding for the field trips, consultants, and special materials, so the district program became an integrated math, English, U.S. History, and SOS class. The latter emphasized activities aimed at building self-esteem and developing strategies for success without the field trips and outside counselors that had been funded in the pilot.

Beyond the Pilot Phase

In the fall, counselors identified approximately five percent of our eighth graders to be at-risk of dropping out. These students were older than average because of failing grades in previous years, had poor attendance, or had been assigned to our school because of poor behavior and/or academic performance at another school. As we reviewed the student profiles and previous school records, we discovered students with poor self esteem, and no connectedness with school and learning. As in the pilot, we met with each parent to explain the program, and enlisted their support. The students were not given a choice about participation. We felt their their reaction would have been "NO! I don't need a special class."

It took some scheduling finesse to work SOS into our schedule. We succeeded by "buying" additional teaching time and assigning a few additional students to each non-SOS math class. Faculty did not mind an additional eighth grade math section - even though the classes were running from 34 to 37 students - when they realized that the lowest performing students would probably be in the SOS class. They also wanted to show support for the SOS teacher for Math and English. She was willingly carrying 45 students in each of her advanced math classes in order to be able to continue the SOS program.

At first the students had difficulty adjusting to the small class setting. They were no longer allowed the luxury of non-involvement. Their behavior became disruptive as students settled into their long established "problem" roles. The teachers had to work overtime to find ways to channel students' energy into positive pursuits. With perseverance, students and teachers finally settled into a comfortable, productive family-type unit. Teachers began to see improvement in academic progress, attitude, and behavior. Students seemed to be feeling a sense of family in the class. They were getting special attention for both academic and personal needs, and their attitudes had improved. Nevertheless, they still did not demonstrate a connectedness to the school as a whole. Once again we began a peer tutoring program. SOS students we[illegible].red with students in the orthopedically and severely handicapped classes. Again, the student partnerships got results.

A Connectedness to the School

Realizing that the handicapped students counted on them, SOS student took their partnerships very seriously. The partner relationships extended into the lunch period (friendliness and recognition where there was none before) and student body activities (support and encouragement when special education students participated). The teachers of the handicapped students saw their students feeling greater worth because of the recognition given to them from the SOS students. The long-sought-after connectedness materialized. Attendance improved even more.

Because this academic/SOS program had been scheduled for only one semester, the eighth graders returned to regular English, Math and elective classes in the second. Only the small U.S. History class was maintained in order to provide the student with the security of the small group "family" unit. The connectedness continued, as attendance records indicated, and, for the most part, the students met with success in their regular classes. An unanticipated bonus was the continuing relationships among the student partners. Several students elected to continue their work in the handicapped classes as monitors or tutors during their elective period.

Seventh Graders Not Yet Ready

The seventh graders were our second semester targets. We asked teachers to recommend students for the class. Others who were frequently referred to the the office were also considered. We anticipated even more success with these students because we could "save them sooner." We saw that success academically, but behaviorally we did not. Seventh graders' immaturity and self-centeredness relative to that of eighth graders may have been a factor.

Not every student met with total success. Two students, one eighth and one seventh, were removed from the program because their behavior continued to be so disruptive that it was having a negative impact on the progress of the other students. We have not yet devised a way to follow the students in order to evaluate whether or not our program provides long-range dropout prevention. We did not make contact with the high schools our eighth graders will be attending so that the counselors could tap into the progress that was made with these students.

But we are asking questions about how to strengthen the program. How can we ensure greater parent participation and support? How can we give greater support to students who are living in very difficult environments? What other activities will encourage connectedness? How can we provide support to these students in their regular classes?

We will not always have the luxury to continue the small classes. How can we generate a desire within the regular classroom teacher to

Final Thoughts

"love the most unlovable?" We found that when the most difficult students are taken from the room, other students "fall" to assume a place at the bottom of the class -- another indicator that we need to help all teachers find ways to help our potential dropout students. Our focal point for staff development next year is to introduce and encourage the use of teaching strategies that address a variety of student learning styles — another case record in the making.

ALTERNATIVES FOR AT-RISK EIGHTH GRADERS

Implementation of frameworks and model curriculum standards at the secondary level has forced educators to consider how the slow and reluctant learner can be successful, not part of the increasingly high percentage of high school dropouts. In a perfect world, we would use four instructional leverage points to address our concerns: 1) Selecting appropriate materials and technology, 2) Finding and using resources, 3) Providing professional development to administrators and teachers, and 4) Enlisting parental involvement and support.

Meet three students whose academic difficulties finally placed them before an alternative placement committee and a retention panel. Ask yourself what you and your district would do with each of these children. In districts with automatic promotions, each of these students would be attending the regular high school. In some districts, they would be in alternative programs without ever attending a regular high school.

JOE is sixteen. He was retained in grade seven, failed grade eight, has good attendance and above average test scores prior to grade six. He is now a discipline problem, recently earning a 15-day suspension for defiance. His single, working mother needs our help. Joe could certainly handle regular academic high school work. Would he? Some retention committees would place him in continuation school because of his age -- if he attended the comprehensive school, Joe would be 20 before he graduates. Seldom does a student stay in high school this long even if successful. Joe could be a good candidate for the California High School Test or later the GED. Regional Occupations Programs (ROP) are also a possibility. Would Joe receive the guidance he needs at a school where there are only guidance technicians and/or counselors with case loads of over 400 students?

EVELYN is a 14-year-old Chapter 1 student. She was retained in grade seven and is failing grade eight. She has poor attendance and, like Joe, is a discipline problem. Her father works 50 miles away from the community. Evelyn certainly could benefit from skills classes where she could receive special attention from a teacher and Chapter I instructional aide. Does the high school have such a program? Given her poor attendance pattern, would the freedom of a high school campus give Evelyn the license to become a virtual non-attender? A semi-self-contained program where the academic subjects are emphasized could be an option, if available. Yet some districts impose standards for placement into the high school. If these standards are not met at the middle school, the child is placed into an alternative such as independent study, sometimes involuntarily, until the student demonstrates a certain level of academic success.

JENNIE is a 15-year-old who is failing the eighth grade. She has been absent ten days this year, has average ability, is unmotivated, not a

discipline problem though possibly a drug problem. Her parents are supportive of her and of school. Like Evelyn and Joe, Jennie could go to the comprehensive high school. Like Evelyn, she is too young for continuation school, but unlike Evelyn she has the skills to handle the work of independent study and the supportive parents who might be able to ensure that the work is completed. With counseling and the right combination of teachers and classes, Jennie might find success at the comprehensive high school. If the school has some kind of drug awareness program, she might be a good candidate. The question I have is: What would make Jennie's high school experience any more successful than the middle school experience? If independent study is considered seriously, the parents must be willing to commit themselves to being the motivating support since the program itself involves little teacher contact.

Options Available

These are some of the options available to help Joe, Evelyn and Jennie in most districts: Promote unsuccessful students to grade nine automatically; convene a school site (junior/middle school) committee to recommend promotion or retention; organize a district-wide committee to review each poor-performing eighth grade student whose current performance foreshadows possible future failure or dropping out of high school.

The "failure" of at-risk youth is analogous to becoming a millionaire in one month by starting with a penny. If a person started with a penny and on the second day doubled it, and on the third day doubled that and continued doubling daily to the end of the month, a fortune is amassed. What is astounding is that at first the consequence of this compounding isn't apparent. The at-risk student likewise starts with only one or a few problems. Who knows at what grade? Sadly, these problems double daily as skills are not learned and as bad habits are acquired, until that student enters high school.

The questions about what to do with at-risk students assume that the questioner is child-oriented and knows to avoid *cook book* solutions -- the rigid philosophy that says either all students must go to a regular comprehensive high school or that all students with academic and behavioral problems should not be allowed into the high school for fear they would compromise effective school standards. Yet, there is a natural bias toward alternative education simply because most teachers and parents either attended or wish they had attended and completed a comprehensive program. There is also a natural tendency on the part of some teachers to achieve higher test scores and fewer discipline referrals at the high school by transferring at- risk students to alternative programs. Moreover, students needing alternative programs are often last in line to receive needed resources because of the competing needs of districts with growing elementary populations, demands for advanced placement courses, and so forth.

There is no panacea for what to do with the hard-to-reach student. The solution requires a continual search for alternatives and a continual process of communication with the comprehensive high school staff and parents. In one of two different districts where I have witnessed problems, each of the middle schools ran its own retention committee and imposed requirements and sanctions that were not articulated or monitored.

My current district has done an excellent job of setting up a district-wide retention committee. While a district's retention policy may cause a fair number of retentions, a district-wide committee that reviews each case creates a tremendous arena for dialogue between district administrators, middle school, high school and alternative education administrators and counselors. One major benefit is for persons involved in alternative education to continue to stress the need to approach alternatives positively and not as a punitive measure. Never say to students, "Since you failed grade eight, you will be placed in independent study until you prove you can earn your way into the high school."

Each district must find its own alternatives. The aspect to remember continually is that the spirit in which alternative education was created was to help students realize there was another way. The other way, however, still requires commitment and responsibility on the part of a student. Using alternatives as a punitive measure must stop.

BUILDING STUDENT MORALE THROUGH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

We are a middle school composed of approximately 900 seventh and eighth grade students with an instructional staff of forty, most of whom have been at the site since its opening more than twenty years ago. At first, the school served a stable middle class community. In recent years, the demographic composition has begun to change as students of lower socioeconomic status and diverse cultural backgrounds have moved into newly constructed housing surrounding the established community. As the newly appointed principal, I enlisted the help of the district staff development specialist to initiate a school effectiveness program. We surveyed staff, parents, and students about various aspects of the school. I then appointed a teacher planning team to review the data.

We learned that standardized test scores were dropping, the percentages of Ds and Fs were increasing, suspensions were increasing, while the numbers of students on the honor roll and average daily attendance were declining. We also heard from teachers that prior efforts to deal with or change the situation had little effect. Teachers complained and were frustrated. We felt we had to try to bring about change through positive reinforcement for the students rather than emphasis on negative behaviors.

Adopting a Student Awards Program

In the fall, teachers voluntarily formed a group to administer a student awards-rewards program. The first activity was an assembly. Students with unsatisfactory citizenship were excluded. Next, we gave special awards to honor roll and scholarship students inviting them to activities such as a continental breakfast, pizza lunch, and a movie party. A rewards raffle, held after the third quarter of school, rewarded students with no academic fails nor an unsatisfactory citizenship grade. Students were given three raffle tickets for each A, two tickets for each B, and one ticket for each C. On the day of the raffle, students and teachers gathered outdoors for the drawing. One hundred ten prizes worth over $500 were awarded to students. These prizes were donated by teachers, parents, and local businesses. Those who were ineligible to attend the raffle remained in class and did self-esteem activities. We hoped that this would encourage students to improve their grades or citizenship so that they could be a part of such activities in the future.

A review of our efforts suggested that the awards-rewards program was effective. Students' standardized test scores remained constant. The number of students receiving Ds and Fs is decreasing, and number of students qualified for honor roll/scholarship awards has increased. Suspension rates for our school decreased in a one-year period. The average daily attendance remains constant.

Students are excited about the raffle and they look forward to the next one. It was a clearly a positive experience. Students who were not eligible for the raffle asked if the event would be repeated next

year, indicating that a future raffle is likely to encourage better citizenship and scholarship.

There has been much teacher support of the awards-rewards program. Teachers gave donations and conducted the activities. No teachers have complained, and many offered compliments and positive comments. Teachers now feel involved in the program and are looking forward to future activities and to organizing fundraisers so that there will be money for an expanded program.

We were somewhat surprised by the enthusiasm shown by a previously less than enthusiastic staff. The entire staff has committed to continue and expand the awards/rewards program next year. They may improve the program with a follow-up study of the students involved in the self-esteem activities to determine if their academic or citizenship grades improve.

Overall, we have all learned from this experience that collaborative problem-solving does, indeed, lead to a better school climate.

VI. USING STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

Several authors write about the usefulness of CSLA training in helping administrators help their staff use student performance data more effectively.

The narratives are:

29. Putting Student Performance Data To Use In An Elementary School

30. Out Of Paranoia, Into The Comfort Zone: Using Grade Point Averages For Planning

31. Bringing CAP To Life

32. Student Performance Data: The More Teachers Understand It, The Better They Use It

33. Teacher Responses To Learning About Student Performance Data

34. Student Performance Data Shapes An Instructional Pacing Plan

PUTTING STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA TO USE IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Our sixth graders' CAP scores dropped off the bottom of the comparison band in reading and math this year, with written language right at the bottom of the band. A problem for any school in any year, it was particularly puzzling to me because the sixth graders' scores the previous year were above or near the top of the comparison band. Teachers who the previous year had been publicly congratulated for score improvements were baffled at the drop. As the newly appointed principal, I was too. I decided that some concentrated attention to the sixth grade scores was appropriate, if not necessarily welcomed by the staff. This is what I did.

I had been appointed principal in the late winter of the previous year, working one day a week in a transition program with the departing principal. Our diverse student enrollment at the school is growing rapidly. We employ 18 full-time teachers. We tend to attract to the area middle and lower middle income families. Free and reduced lunches comprise about 35 percent of the student body. Until recently, the school has had an unjustified reputation as being ineffective. We have worked hard to change the community's perception by agressive communication, marketing, student recognition programs, attention to the physical environment, and positive publicity.

I had just finished ATC training in *Using Student Performance Data for Instructional Decisionmaking* when I learned that our new superintendent shared my interest in making better use of our student performance data. As a vice principal, I had had little experience using such information and found the ATC training both interesting and timely. Our new superintendent agreed strongly that we could do more with data, so plans for analyzing and using test scores became part of the district's "technical core" and appeared in the district's focus objectives. It was also my goal for my school.

To introduce my plan to the staff, I adopted a technical leadership position. I did so because I believe teachers are reluctant to read and use student test data, more because they have little training in how to use it than because they harbor a general hatred of testing. By demystifying the terminology and process, I felt I could win teachers over to using data in their planning. I knew that they had no prior school training in test-score interpretation. In fact, the subject of testing was never discussed at the staff level.

In reviewing the school's California Assessment Program (CAP) scores, I found that third grade scores were respectable, marking possibly the bottom one-third of the comparison band. It was the sixth grade scores that were most puzzling, so we focused on learning more about what might have caused the drop.

I began by scheduling a student-free day for teachers about one month before the administration of the CAP test. I noticed that teachers expressed more interest in testing when they saw that it was a concern of both the principal and superintendent. I explained that I wanted to give teachers a better understanding of testing and terminology and to begin some long-range planning.

Why the Sixth Grade CAP Score Drop?

Our workday was divided into three sessions. I reviewed testing terminology, differences between the CAP and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and the reasons why test scores change. The superintendent gave an overview of our CAP and SAT scores, comparing them to district trends and sharing his analysis of what might have happened to cause the sixth graders' scores to change. For the remainder of the day, we used the corporate values model presented in ATC to examine our sixth grade math scores which by now everyone agreed needed first attention.

The corporate values model is a group process using the Rationale and Content from the CAP test. It allows comparisons between perceived importance and actual achievement on any particular item of the Rationale. We followed the process by having people rate the areas of the Rationale and Content according to importance and plugged the information into the three-by-three matrix exactly as we had done in CSLA training. We were then able to narrow our sixth grade math scores down to five areas that needed individual attention based on high importance and low achievement. We familiarized everyone with examples from the Rationale and Content and resolved to work on those areas as a whole school, not just the sixth grade teachers. We set goals for what scaled scores we would like to see in a month and again one year later.

Once we worked through the process, the teachers did not have trouble reaching consensus on focus areas in sixth grade math. There was some dissent about my focusing on student performance data rather than curriculum or instructional strategy issues. An intermediate teacher who had received low SAT scores discounted the validity and usefulness of tests. I heard the usual comments: "Tests don't measure everything," and "Do you want us to teach to the test?" I explained that in my school teachers could only discount the importance of testing when their students received high scores. Then, they could criticize testing to their hearts' delight. I heard no more on the subject.

I let parents and the public know what we were working on through my regular newsletter and in site council and P.T.A. presentations. On closer analysis of the test results, I noticed that our school's socioeconomic index was higher than the district average for the past two years at sixth grade and the past year at third grade. Because our

school's AFDC counts were significantly higher than district averages, I suspected parents of inaccurate reporting of their education and income levels. Again, I wrote to parents, explaining the importance of the CAP test and how the information they gave the school affected score analysis. I asked that they give us accurate information by testing day. They did. Teachers completed that portion of the test for students.

Testing conditions, I knew, could be firmed up. Recognizing that some of our students don't eat breakfast, I arranged for the mid-morning snack to be served before school on the day of the test. I talked to each third and sixth grade classes about the importance of the test and my goal for our school to be an outstanding one. I asked students' cooperation in getting to bed by 9p.m. the night before the test and to be sure to eat breakfast. I explained to them that test results are a kind of a report card on student learning -- that they let us know how well we educators were doing our jobs -- so the students needed to try their hardest. Finally, on the day of the test, I located students in the halls who had not eaten breakfast and directed them to the cafeteria for snacks. As the testing began, I prayed.

When the results came in late September, I was afraid to open the package. I was in no way convinced, as I held the unopened results, that my strategies would prove effective. I kept thinking of the credibility loss a new site administrator might face if, after such an effort, scores went down!

Results!

They didn't. If fact, we were all pleasantly surprised by the results. On the third grade level, scaled scores jumped as much as 56 points in math. Our smallest gain was from 323 to 328 in written language. Third grade was above the comparison band in all areas. The socio-economic index for our school dropped while that for the district remained constant. At the sixth grade level our largest gain was 52 scaled score points in reading and math with scores of 310 and 312 respectively. The sixth grade was above the comparison band in all three areas and topped the district scaled scores in all three as well! I was not prepared for that kind of growth the first year. Teachers and parents were pleased with the results. One proud father told me he now tells anyone who questions our school that our scores "rank with the best of them."

He who waves his CAP scores...

I've been told that he who waves his CAP scores the first year must also do so the second year, so I began to plan a student-free day for the year picking up where we left off last spring. Taking the day was somewhat confounded by the sunsetting of SIP and our scrambling to assemble a viable School-Based Coordinated Program under a state-funded grant. Nevertheless, staff gathered again about a month before the CAP test. We began by reviewing the same terminology

discussed the year before. Teachers were now more interested, because this year they were expected to analyze and discuss test results. In small groups, they analyzed and reported out. I recorded their comments on chart paper. I shared my own analysis if I felt the groups might have overlooked a key point.

Again, we identified common areas of concern. Grade level groups were responsible for using Rationale and Content to develop instructional prescriptions to address shortcomings at the third and sixth grade levels. I collected each group's prescriptions on a form I had developed for this purpose and had them typed, copied and redistributed. We finished the day by setting goals for the May test.

In Retrospect

To sustain this activity, I have spent hours reading, researching testing. I sent a teacher to a workshop on raising test scores and asked for a full report to the staff. If I were to consider changing anything, I would consider monitoring and adjusting the teacher analysis of test scores outlined in the previous paragraph. Teachers had never actually analyzed scores before. Most felt it was tedious and not the best use of time. They want me to analyze the test results and report to them so they have more time to work with prescriptions. I'm not sure. Even if all teachers didn't wildly enjoy the process, they all have some idea what goes into a thorough analysis. I would also hold the student-free day earlier in the year so teachers would have more time to implement the learning from their diagnoses and prescriptions.

As I conclude, the SAT results for the second year have just come in. The general trend is improved scores at the second and fifth grades, with reading comprehension taking a very slight dip at second grade. The bad news is that the fourth grade scores took a rather significant drop in most areas. I have a possible explanation, but that's another case study.

OUT OF PARANOIA, INTO THE COMFORT ZONE
Using Grade Point Averages for Planning

The high school where I am now dean of students is one of four in the district. Twenty years ago it was the prestigious new school -- the second high school in town. Today it has the lowest enrollment and parents strongly resi st suggested boundary changes that might result in student transfers to this campus.

I began teaching here over eight years ago. As someone fairly new to the profession, I discovered immediately that little thought had been given to orientating new teachers to the school. I was given my keys and a list of the courses I would teach. I became acquainted with the tenor of the English department through monthly department meetings but learned very little about people and operations across the rest of the campus. The sprawling school plant is laid out so as to entrench departmentalization.

Seventy-five percent of the teachers and eighty percent of the administrators still remember the glory days, referring to them often and with regret when discussing problems facing the school now. Some blame the principal, who came about the time the demographics began changing. But the demographics must be reckoned with: the third high school in town drew students from our more "prestigious" neighborhoods. Our twelfth grade CAP data indicates that the SES here is now lower than at any of the other three high schools even though the AFDC rate is not the highest. Some staff remark that we have become a very "blue-collar" community and remember the "white-collar" days."

Our faculty is generally unacquainted with how to plan using standardized test goals and individual test items. Most meet with serious suspicion suggestions for aligning curriculum to tests. Perceiving it as a threat to individual control over lesson plans and classroom practices, teachers labeled alignment as a band-aide approach to the larger issue of problem clientele or problem administrators. Many faculty members believe students simply lack the necessary discipline to perform better, and this lack will inevitably prevent them from scoring well. Our students continue to perform poorly, and our staff continues to teach as they have always taught. While the faculty shares the goal of improving student performance data, they don't understand how to go about doing so in an educationally sound manner.

Not surprisingly, working together has not been a common faculty practice on the campus. Teachers within academic departments do not share lesson plans, do not compare philosophies within their disciplines, and seldom discuss mutual students. Polite, reserved conversations seldom deal with the specifics of the private classroom world of the individual teacher. Teachers tend to judge one another on the quality of preparation seen in the students passed along to them -- and on overheard student comments.

The principal rarely calls more than four general staff meetings per year. I was never, in that first year or those following, given clues about how to grade my students. I was left to define criteria and standards on my own. Nor did I have any awareness of standardized testing going on across campus beyond the competency tests given twice yearly, tests which teachers were strictly forbidden to look at for fear they would change their teaching strategies or "teach to the test!"

GPA Dropped Every Year

As the local press frequently points out, both the rate of participation in and the level of performance on standardized tests (SAT, CTBS, PSAT, CAP, and AP subject tests) are comparatively low for this school. The grade point averages are low, too. Although the general public does not hear about it, our cumulative GPA has been dropping slightly but steadily every year, a hundredth or tenth of a percent, while the GPAs at the other schools have remained stable. The most recent report shows a fourth quarter GPA of 1.97; the other schools show from 2.35 to 2.55. The spread from teacher to teacher here starts at a high of 3.5 and bottoms out at .59.

In addition to negative press and negative community perception, we are vulnerable to attrition. To date, we have no special programs: no agriculture program, no ROTC, no International Baccalaureate. In spite of the fact that the teachers feel they are hard-working and care about student success, students feel they have little to brag about. District-office leaders have, until recently, left the school to its own devices to turn all this around.

As our student demographics change, our students appear less and less well-prepared from one year to the next. Teachers compete for the few recognizably excellent students, teacher-pleasers, remnants of the once highly school-oriented student body. Teachers also compete for the prime scheduling locations for college-prep classes. Curses abound if such classes are scheduled concurrently. The "good" students will not be available to fill one of the classes. The drop in "good" students has lead teachers to conclude that their colleagues are not competent. While not openly discussed, this belief is communicated in bitter allusions to administrators who do nothing about "incompetence." The climate has become uneasy, laden with paranoia and despair on the part of teachers, administrators, and departments, who are alarmed by our inability to reach our students, and who now compete for limited dollars, the assumption being that dollars for supplies will be the panacea for poor performances.

In this school, instructional leadership has been left to department chairpersons. There appears to be little administrative follow-up to check whether those chairpersons are competent, effective leaders.

We needed leverage: leverage to move mountains in the way of community and district-office confidence and support, some way to generate faculty momentum for change.

In a fall meeting, a new assistant superintendent referred to our low school-cumulative GPA and to our poor showing on tests in her preliminary evaluation of the principal. He asked his administrative staff to work at improving the data. They decided teacher evaluations in the spring would take into account student GPA scores. Teachers whose classes showed low GPAs would be expected to improve them.

Winds of Change, or Fuel for Paranoia?

Teachers were intensely bitter about this approach. They had never been informed that the district paid attention to the school's cumulative GPA. That their students' GPAs would be scrutinized as part of their evaluations was alarming. Suddenly they were being evaluated on student GPA improvements, but they had never been given a clear understanding of an acceptable GPA, or how one GPA indicated good teaching while another might indicte the opposite. Furthermore, it was not clear that the evaluators would be taking into account the types of classes various teachers were assigned or the age and ability of students, thus making judgements about score gains seemingly capricious. Teachers felt called on the carpet for violating something they had never known was a rule.

Evaluations done that spring did not appear consistent to teachers. It seemed the issue of GPA scores had been arbitrarily raised in evaluation conferences only of teachers historically at odds with the principal. Teachers felt they had no opportunity to discuss reasons for their personal grading criterion. It looked like teachers were being pressured to change grades and to lower standards rather than to look for and correct the source of poor student performance.

It was in this climate that I became the dean of students with a responsibility for curriculum. I was to find ways for my principal to lead the staff toward higher student success rates as reflected in grade point averages and more competitive performances on standardized tests. Thanks to CSLA, I had studied ways to improve student performance data. I made plans to share that learning with teachers to show how testing can be a useful tool to improve instruction and to make curriculum alignment a common and comfortable practice.

Fortunately, by then I was known as a teacher who had been dedicated to academics, a trait which earned me immediate leverage with the staff. With rumors rampant that teachers were being chastised for low GPAs, many had their guards up. I proceeded slowly but, nevertheless, met with all the hostility that a year of brooding over the rumors could produce.

Knowing from my own experience as a teacher that little joint planning had ever taken place within departments, I was determined to change that. I duplicated the first GPA report of the school year, showing teachers the breakdown by grade and overall GPAs of all high schools and middle schools. I provided a cover letter for the report, introducing my new role and offering a possible explanation for the spread of the grades. I wanted this to serve as an example of the kind of variables we would begin looking for in brainstorming sessions.

Our students appeared to earn more B's and D's and fewer A's, C's and F's than students at the other schools. I suggested that perhaps our students were looking for "good enough." They had the skills to avoid the grades of C and F, but satisfied themselves with aiming for B's and D's, which ever grades they knew would be the most acceptable at home. Even if this explanation were true, I emphasized, we would not want to be satisfied with that attitude. Rather we would begin to look for ways to encourage students to excel.

On the next GPA report, there was a very gentle rise in grades, not statistically significant, but positive enough to prompt discussion. I graphed the data for all four schools, showing GPAs semester by semester beginning in 1982, data which had come to the school but which had never been shared with the staff because no one knew what it meant or what to do with it. I shared the graph and the latest report with department chairs, again emphasizing our need to approach discussion of GPAs as fact-finding events. In spite of my repeated emphasis, several department chairpersons reported back to staff disgruntled summaries of the witch hunts the administrators were mounting. One department member, a neighbor of mine, commented one evening, "So you've taken over the hound-dog role. You're gonna sniff out the bad teachers, and the principal's given you the scent of low GPA. Now you'll be after 'em. Does he always make you do his dirty work for him?"

"No," I replied, "it's not dirty work, and it's not his. It's work that belongs to you, your fellow teachers, and your department chairpersons. It's your work. I'm just helping everyone recognize it as something that needs doing and doing by the ones who legitimately should be doing it."

"What happens if we make up a philosophy of grading and our GPA still goes down?" he asked. This was a question I had spent some time over, but I had no answer.

"If that happens," I replied, "then your administrators can tell the ones watching us watching you that you know what you're doing and why. Right now no one can tell me what those low grades are

based upon, or if you all agree on what should be the basis for grades. By the end of the process, I want you to be able to stand up and answer sticky questions like that."

We pursued this goal carefully. In one meeting we brainstormed eighteen possible explanations for the school's declining GPA. We looked for ways to motivate higher performance, not just for answers about why the grades were declining. I provided each department head with a list of the departments' GPAs. It was not a popular act. I was violating the norm of teacher autonomy. Taking this step was sacrilege in our school. But I did it and am glad. When we discussed the .59 to 3.55 GPA spread from teacher to teacher, they began to agree that such disparities could signal a problem. Moreover, they raised questions that they did want to be able to answer. We parted in agreement that we would talk about student data and ask department members for opinions and suggestions.

My principal and I made ourselves available to discuss GPA information at department meetings. We continued to emphasize the fact-finding nature of the GPA project. We came to agreement that our most important task was to motivate students to achieve and to find ways to teach teach them effectively. I suggested as a start that departments attempt to describe the ideal student who is subject-matter literate. Teachers could then devise a subject-matter literacy scale with an outstanding level (A), at an appreciably high level (B), an average amount (C), some but insufficient (D), or no gains (F).

Results

We discussed grading problems: the tyranny of points, the needs of special students, the problems of attendance, the relative weight of homework, and so forth. By the third monthly department meeting, and after much campus-wide talk about the issue, all chairpersons had agreed that a departmental philosophy of grading would be a good idea, fostering unified grading practices while leaving teachers in control of individual teaching strategies. At this writing, all department chairpersons expect to hand in grading philosophies by the end of the first quarter.

I was pleased with the eventual positive response of staff members, although I do not want to make it sound simpler than it was. Some of the meetings were heated. Some department members felt attacked and compromised by the request for a consensus approach. It took a great deal of time and talking and note exchanging—from February through June—to finally gain trust for the plan and to cultivate hope for the future.

I had wanted to move faster than we did with the faculty and am personally glad that my principal slowed me down in my attack on the problem. I was quite set on having the staff leave in June with departmental philosophies completed. I am still disappointed that

individual teacher planning this summer will not be based on departmental philosophies. Nevertheless, I see that pressure would not have been healthy, given the initial hostilities. I am now more aware of the importance of allowing the department chairpersons to agree on their own deadlines after recognizing the problem as theirs to deal with. Reinforced for me, once again, was the fact that, although raising the grade point average was my project, my role in the project was to facilitate and lead, not to demand and enforce. I am responsible to assist the staff in improving their performance in a very ambiguous arena.

I also learned that I needn't face meetings with fear. If discussions are approached with a helping tone, teachers will be grateful not angry. On a campus with so much paranoia, to have enforced a sharing experience so far beyond the comfort zone of the large majority would have been to drive faculty further away from one another.

In the rest of my life as an administrator, I will remember to watch out for the comfort zone and to be willing to be incremental in reform. I have yet to see how the GPA will fare as a result of all this, but the whole process of discussing the GPA as an issue began the important work of building staff interaction and joint planning into the day-to-day life of the school. I know I personally am willing to lead another day on this campus because of what I learned working with this project.

BRINGING CAP TO LIFE

Mine is a one-school district nestled in the coastal hills of California. The school's K-8 students come from diverse family backgrounds, ranging from migrant farm workers to doctors and lawyers. This community once supported three of the largest active communes in the United States, living in the midst of a very traditional population. No stranger to conflict, this school once claimed three separate instructional programs. After years of controversy and lack of consensus, the current school board decided to try to unify the factions.

In the recent past the school has moved to having only one alternative program and one regular program. The distinctions between them have become blurred as the staff, parents and school board have begun to work together. The school is able to offer a relatively rich academic and enrichment program, including one of the finest science and fine arts programs in the county.

As a new superintendent, I came to the district with several ideas that I hoped to institute. When I discovered that the school's principal, P, was an ATC participant, I was thrilled. He and I had long conversations about our visions for the ideal school district and found ourselves in agreement on what we hoped to see for ours. Our lists of areas we wanted to work on included finding a way to make CAP test data more relevant to the board and staff.

It appeared that when CAP scores were good, everybody wanted to take credit for them. When they were sub-standard, problems were generally blamed on the test or testing conditions. I came to understand that the previous administration had taken a laissez faire approach to the tests, taking little care in test administration and making no effort to work with staff to interpret or understand the results. Given this atmosphere, how could we make the tests more meaningful and useful without creating the appearance that all we cared about were good scores?

Finding the Leverage to Get Staff Involved

P hadn't been able to attend the modules on student performance in the CSLA training, and I was excited to learn that our director was willing to allow me to provide P's make-up. Our director is quite a task master, and he insisted that we provide videotapes of presentations that P made to the board and staff. This provided me with a great point of leverage with the board, as I explained to them that P and I needed to work together to analyze the previous year's CAP data and present the information to them as part of his ATC requirement.

After several hours of training, P and I were ready to make a series of team presentations to the board. Considering the district's CAP history, it was critical for us to involve several of the school culture's

key figures. So we invited heroes, priests and priestesses to the board meetings. We hoped that these people would bless the idea of the staff entering into activities involving CAP.

In our first board presentation I was the primary presenter, giving an overview of CAP and of the third grade CAP results. Since the third grade scored below the comparison band in two areas, and the sixth and eighth grade scored within or above the band in all areas, board members began to express interest in relative strengths and weakness. So we scheduled another CAP presentation.

At our next presentation, P took the board through a mock "Prioritizing Targets With Staff" activity, using skills taken from *Content and Rationale for the Eighth Grade Written Language*. They took great interest, as did the audience, which included staff and members of the school site council. After the prioritizing activity, we presented the results of the eighth grade written language test, which were strong, and compared those results with the priorities. The correlation between skills that board members considered important and student performance on those skills was high. The next question was how to get teacher buy-in without making teachers feel threatened or resentful.

A Dynamic Instructional Leadership Team

P's tenure in the school afforded him great respect from several key staff members. The support of these cultural leaders along with a newly created grade level structure (K-3, 4-6, 7-8) created the perfect opportunity for him to take the CAP message to teachers. He arranged for CAP discussions at each of the monthly grade level meetings. Each group participated in the prioritizing activity and then compared their set of prioritized skills with actual student performance. Skills for the activity were taken from the *Content and Rationale* for each grade level tested. Teachers in the 4-6 and 7-8 grade level groups showed much interest in the comparisons. They discussed areas in which students did not score as well as expected, as well as methods for increasing performance.

Sixth and eighth grade teachers readily acknowledged that many of the skills on which their students under-performed had not been taught. As an example, students in grade six did poorly with synonyms. The 4th-6th teachers discussed "sponge activities" dealing with synonyms that could be enjoyable for students and fill those minutes while everyone was waiting to move to the day's next activity. These teachers wanted to know where they could get copies of the *Content and Rationale* and other documents, like the curriculum guides and handbooks for different subjects.

Old Wounds are Hard to Mend

We took virtually the same approach with K-3 teachers. In these grades the split between the alternative and regular program teachers is great. Unfortunately, one of the alternative third grade teachers

was on a half-year leave of absence. Much of the meeting time was spent in philosophical discussions about the value of testing. Many of the teachers expressed great interest in the results, others were less than enthusiastic.

Many of the primary grade teachers agreed that student performance on CAP could be enhanced through improved teacher attitude toward the test and greater care in its administration. At least two of the third grade teachers were very interested in finding ways to help their students improve on skills that tested low.

In spite of his concerns that everyone didn't buy in at the same level, P came away confident that the teachers now had a beneficial new understanding of CAP. His own confidence with the whole process was also strengthened. But how would we calculate the effort's success?

Some Quantifiable Successes and Frustrations

We recently received our CAP results and were happy to see that the eighth grade scores were still at or above the 85th percentile in the state in all areas. We were very excited that our sixth grade scores increased dramatically — rising above the 90th percentile in all areas. Although the teachers haven't seen these results, we know they'll be pleased and proud, and that we will have institutionalized a change in their attitudes.

The third grade scores also improved in most areas, but not nearly as much as we'd hoped. Whereas the sixth and eighth grade students scored above Q3 in all areas, the third graders scored at or below Q1 in all areas. The question that we expect from the primary teachers is, "How can this truly reflect the abilities of the students in our school?"

Some Non-Quantifiable, Positive Side Effects

But possibly the greatest strength of the process was that many teachers have begun to ask, "What can I do to insure that my students develop many of the important skills that are tested on CAP and (other norm referenced) tests?" This is a very different question than, "How can I get my kids to score better?" For while good test scores are important, it is more important to be concerned about the skills involved — both the academic and the test-taking skills.

Here's a prime example of this new attitude on the part of most of the teachers: Our eighth grade English teacher came in during the summer and announced that she was going to stop using the old grammar text for daily lessons and instead use it only for selected lessons and reference. She'd decided to adopt a whole-language approach and devote more time to literature and writing. "But", she asked, "how can I be sure I'm teaching all the skills the kids will need?" We supplied her with both the *Content and Rational for Written Expression* and the *Writing Handbook*. She'd already obtained a copy

of the *English/Language Arts Framework*. Last week she reported that she was really happy with her new approach and that the kids were responding well.

What Next?

We've had some successes and some disappointments, but there's no way that we're going to quit. Now most of our teachers have a set of skills that will enable us to analyze our test results more effectively, so we will very likely continue our CAP analysis by grade levels. The big question is, how do we get real involvement and commitment from the teachers who haven't yet bought in? Is it possible that peer pressure will be enough to effect a change of attitude, or might this backfire, cause resentment and divide the teachers? Should the administrators take over the function of CAP testing in the primary grades, or will that let the teachers who are resistant off the hook? How do we deal with the attitude that such testing is harmful to children and of little value to the teacher? Is there a way to reconcile all of these concerns and allow everybody to come out a winner?

STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA: The More Teachers Understand It, the Better They Use It

I am the district GATE resource specialist in a school with students from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Approximately ten percent of our more than 8000 students district-wide qualify for the GATE program. We use the Structure of Intellect (SOI) test with our entire second grade to determine placement, and have done so for ten years because it seems to be a culturally-fair instrument.

When I first received "the assignment" – to conduct a series of three inservice workshops on "Underachieving GATE Students"from the Director of Categorical Projects – I tried to convince her that I couldn't do it. Although I had worked with underachieving students, both GATE and others, I did not feel that I knew enough about this specific topic to present a workshop on it. I was not an expert in any way on why GATE students underachieve. (The district identifies underachieving GATE students by the judgment of their teachers, a grade point average at or below 2.9, and by Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills CTBS test scores of 85 percent or below on any subtest or the total battery.) However, I was still supposed to address underachievement among third through eighth grade GATE students, point out some possible causes, and develop strategies to break the pattern of underachievement.

With my director's assurance that I could indeed carry this off, I retreated to my office and began a search for how to begin. First of all, I did think the workshops were necessary. Many teachers were frustrated with the GATE program, convinced that if students were "gifted" they should perform as such. Too often, they did not perform as expected, to the dismay of teachers, confused parents, and students as well. We all needed a deeper understanding of GATE children and why they might underachieve. I began my search for information. The question guiding my search was: "Why do some of our brightest, most exceptional students perform below their perceived ability level, or even fail to meet passing standards at all?"

I found several theories that attempted to explain underachievement in GATE students. Some suggested that perhaps parents exert too much pressure on students to perform, causing stress, leading some students to not act the way teachers think they ought to act. Consequently, teachers believed they are inappropriately placed in a gifted program when they may only need better work or study habits.

These explanations rang true for me. During my ten years of classroom experience, I had often used an individualized approach to motivate students who were not performing according to their abilities. However, I determined which students needed this special attention by intuition, not on performance data. As it does for many teachers, individualization worked for some students but not for

others. However, in working with gifted students teachers often feel that "If they are gifted, they will make it anyway." I was reminded that the evidence indicates a somewhat different conclusion.

More Specifics Needed

I knew I needed more specifics to build on. While looking for baseline information I was led directly to student performance data. Although data have always been available, teachers never considered it viable or important to planning. But if teachers understood student performance data and how to use it, they could tailor activities to specific student abilities.

I knew I would have to guide them through it, and initiate a process that would require them to study data and draw conclusions about the program. I gathered multiple data sources on all our GATE children for teachers to read and analyze—SOI profiles, GATE student identification procedure, and grade reports both current and cumulative for the target students. I wanted teachers to understand the nature of giftedness, the importance of providing appropriate curriculum, and developing expectations relevant to gifted students; they also needed to know how to develop plans or strategies to reverse underachieving behavior.

I also decided that the workshop would become a seminar instead. The teachers and I would learn together what some of the causes of underachievement were. What a relief—I didn't have to have all the answers!

I actually held three separate seminars, one for elementary teachers, one for the language arts department of one middle school, and the third for the other two middle schools. Our first seminar focused on data. Because we viewed the SOI as the primary source of identifying gifted students, we studied it carefully and considered the curriculum implications of each part of the test.

Carefully analyzing each student's individual profile, we began to recognize that students' ability could vary considerably from subject area to subject area. We could see that some excelled in math-related subtests, some in semantically-related subtests, and some in creative or evaluative areas; others excelled in all areas. We also learned that changes in the selection criteria made three years ago caused varying student achievement levels from group to group. Three years ago, students could enter the gifted program with fewer SOI cells in the gifted areas than currently required. This discovery established that teachers had not been mistaken in their assessment of students. In fact, fifth through eighth grade GATE students had much higher percentages of underachievement as defined by the district than our third and fourth graders.

After studying the SOI profiles, we charted each student using a grid and entered all the data on a class chart. We included the number of SOI gifted cells, CTBS scores for the current year, grade point average for middle schools, and teacher judgment based on teacher developed criteria. We then had a complete picture of each individual student, class, school, and a picture of underachievement of the target group for the entire district. We now knew that, though technically underachieving, many students might actually be achieving according to their individual talents. At this point, I heard the long awaited "Aha!"

Unexpected Results

Originally, I felt that the teachers would be either uninterested or negative about focusing the seminar on data analysis. The opposite was true. This was one of the first times that they had been given large amounts of raw data and asked to analyze it and draw conclusions. They were very positive about the experience. They wanted to know more about the SOI and how they could use it in a more prescriptive manner in the classroom.

In addition to teacher interest, my own learning was the most surprising outcome. I saw myself as a more competent leader able to guide others to a more focused understanding of GATE students. I could help others make sense of complicated and confusing data without having to have the answers. I had learned to use information as a tool to achieve a greater understanding of the situation.

As I received requests for further seminars, I realized that a previous cultural norm – teacher distrust of data – was undergoing change. In this case, school performance data had definitely empowered teachers to provide direction for instructional decision making.

TEACHER RESPONSES TO LEARNING ABOUT STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA

I am a Chapter 1 program manager for a middle school in a district of more than 6,000 students, 300 teachers, 12 elementary schools, 2 junior high schools, 1 middle school, and 1 state preschool. The district serves a diverse population with some 40 languages represented.

During one recent school year, the district's main goal was to improve CAP scores. All site administrators were required to submit a plan to the associate superintendent for instruction which included an analysis of their school's scores and a plan to improve them. Teacher committees were established at the third, sixth and eighth grade levels for all of the CAP content areas. The committees were to examine the scope and sequence of district adopted texts, to suggest sponge activities and supplemental materials, and to create a timeline for making needed changes. In several content areas, the committees found discrepancies between what students were being taught and what they were expected to know for CAP. In other words, our curriculum did not align with the state frameworks in some cases.

The district focused improvement efforts on mathematics since this was the area of greatest weakness throughout the grade levels. Remedial instruction in math and problem solving skills were targeted as areas in need of improvement. The district purchased a program of daily, mixed-practice exercises for use by all third, sixth, and eighth grade students. Teachers participated in several staff development sessions on problem solving and math manipulatives. A mentor teacher was appointed for mathematics. The results of these efforts were highly successful for the third and sixth grades.

During the *same year, I* enrolled *in CSLA and received training in Using Your School's Student Performance Data for Instructional Decision Making*. One of the homework assignments for this session required each member to analyze their school's CAP data using the instrument entitled, *CAP Test Results: What We Believe They Say*, developed by Jim Cox, director of research and evaluation for the Anaheim Union High School District. At our next session, each participant made a presentation to the group and received feedback on how to improve the analysis process.

What a valuable tool this instrument could become for our district! The instrument provided schools with an introspective view of their program and a means to analyze systematically all factors that contribute to improving a school's performance. After sharing my analysis of our school's CAP scores with my site administrator, I was asked to present the findings at a faculty meeting. Little did I know how great the need was for this kind of information!

My presentation was a success. Another principal in the district requested that I analyze their school's data. Although in that school,

test results were less than favorable, the presentation was well-received by the staff. Three student performance targets were set and inservice training to support their goals discussed. I gave four more presentations that year, and eight the next – six in the district and two in outside schools.

Three Objectives

The major goal of my presentations was to assist site administrators and staff members to improve the quality of the instructional program. I established three specific objectives: 1) to raise the level of awareness of all staff members at each site regarding CAP; 2) to familiarize staff members with the CAP analysis instrument; and 3) to analyze and verify CAP results with standardized test results so as to assess the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. In some schools, where an extended or follow-up presentation was given, I had three additional objectives: 1) to set student performance targets based on positive and negative trends and to brainstorm possible interventions; 2) to suggest that staffs consider incorporating the targeted areas into their school plans and program quality reviews; and 3) to help staff members determine what support they would need to achieve their staff development targets.

I was pleased with the results. Staff members became aware of the direct relationship between the state framework and CAP testing. They realized that they were being held accountable for teaching the framework material, and that the CAP test is a uniform instrument for assessing their programs. Teachers were conscious of the importance of accurately reporting the information required to determine comparison bands, and they had a better understanding of why test scores change. The environments for testing improved in the schools. Staffs had a list of strategies that could enhance their test scores with little or no cost. Finally, staffs understood results from the planned intervention might not be immediately apparent. They see now why it is much more beneficial to study three-to-four-year trends rather than changes over a year or two.

District scores also went up within the comparison bands for all content areas at both the third and sixth grade levels. For eighth grade, the district was within the bands for reading and written expression but scored below the comparison bands in mathematics, history, social science, and science. We still have work to do.

I also felt some personal rewards from giving presentations. I became increasingly adept at interpreting CAP results, and I refined my presentation skills. Eventually, I was to become a trainer in the area of student performance data. This prompted my district to give me released time and my local ATC to pay my expenses so that I might receive further training in this module from its developer. Teachers commented that they had never understood CAP so well, and that

they finally grasped why schools are required to administer it. It was exciting to see teachers willing to assume leadership roles in order to effect changes in their schools; they became empowered.

As I gave more presentations, I became fascinated by the different responses from school to school. Differences in culture made for considerable variation in receptiveness to performance information. In schools where scores fell well within or above the comparison bands, any reference to minor areas for staff attention, might get teachers so stuck on the one negative aspect of the report that they couldn't move beyond that point. In other cases, I found myself working with staffs who were ready and eager to set targets and plan strategies to achieve the targets, but lacked the leadership necessary to move them from score analysis to implementation of the targets. On two occasions, I hesitatingly called principals whose schools had scored poorly for three or four years running. I stated my reluctance to share such bad news with their teachers. The principals, however, assured me not to worry, that the staff needed to be made aware of how bad things really were. They were right. I was truly amazed by these teachers' reaction. The staffs transformed the information into a powerful tool for school improvement and self-analysis. In other words, through commitment, collaboration and collegiality, the teachers became empowered by using student performance data to inform their work.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA SHAPES AN INSTRUCTIONAL PACING PLAN

During my first year as assistant principal, I suggested teachers might use information from student test data to help pace instruction. I was responding to a problem that teachers, the principal and the district were aware of: declining student achievement scores.

My recommendation was roundly rejected. Many teachers had unpleasant memories of pacing instruction at other sites. I was aware that teachers did not analyze student test data. In previous years, test results were perfunctorily presented to staff, then filed away. But a district review team had identified specific instructional areas that needed improvement, and teachers saw the student population changing and suspected that long-favored instructional practices were less and less effective. Still, they did not see change coming from test score information.

Early in the second year, I clearly explained the CAP diagnostic displays to each teacher and clarified the information presented on CTBS print-outs. In the teachers' room, some staff informally discussed teaching strategies and instructional materials, noting that test results seemed to say that what teachers were doing in their classrooms was yielding low to negative results. They talked about teaching styles, learning modalities, instructional materials, and so forth. They agreed there was a problem, and they wanted to work on it collectively.

The leadership team of teacher representatives and administrators met, and one member recommended initiating an instructional pacing plan using the CTBS category objectives — the same recommendation I had made a year earlier!

Immediately, staff met to establish priority category objectives. They developed a plan to meet periodically by grade level to discuss student progress and update the pacing plans. They also reviewed strategies for using flexible grouping in and between classrooms in order to introduce, remediate and/or reteach lessons. Clearly the staff now owned the problem of declining test scores and were willing to work toward solutions. As the year progressed, teachers met monthly to set timetables for teaching to the category objectives and evaluating proficiency.

Toward the end of the school year, teachers assessed the value of pacing instruction. Teachers at one grade level found that they had inappropriately sequenced category objectives. Students had been asked to become proficient in areas where pre-requisite skills had not been taught. It was no surprise that many students didn't succeed, and teachers made plans to revise the procedures for the next year.

Most staff were pleased with the communication channels that had been opened. They had benefitted from peer teaching demonstration lessons with follow-up discussions, periodic grade level meetings to adjust the pacing of instruction, and informal discussions. The first two of these interactive procedures differed from old patterns in that I approached teachers who had shown significant strengths during Stull observations and asked them to share their instructional strategies with their peers. The idea of demonstrating a lesson for new teachers was not original, but to do so for experienced peers was new and challenging. Teachers became more aware of the value of exchanging ideas through demonstration lessons and regular grade level meetings.

At the end of the school year, I was rewarded to see that teachers were willing to make changes in their instructional programs once they knew the problem and some of its probable causes such as transiency, demographics, low-middle to low socio-economic level, and split grade levels. Analyzing the test data certainly revealed many teaching/learning weaknesses, though not all teachers valued this information's source. All were held accountable for implementing an instructional strategies plan, however.

The devil's advocates were resistant to labeling specific time frames for evaluating students' progress for proficiency. Throughout the year, as I tried to encourage them to do so, they would claim that instruction was evaluated many times during the year or that it was difficult to predict dates for proficiency.

If I had to do it over ...

If I had it to do over, I would make some changes. For example, I would definitely remind teachers that once they have identified the category objectives that describe areas in need of improvement, they should teach priority objectives according to the logical instructional sequence. But our successes have been well worth the time and effort. Students have learned skills and concepts that many would not have mastered previously, and we opened avenues of communication that are giving teachers varied opportunities to exchange ideas. Most teachers want to apply the instructional pacing plan next year after they have critically analyzed test data for their new classes. Many feel that if they teach the same grade, only minor changes in the pacing plan will be necessary despite a totally new group of youngsters.

VII. MATCHING VISION AND REALITY

Several administrators write about the value of using CSLA's recommended processes for setting school mission and goal statements and for using the particular strengths of individual school climates to support these processes. Authors in this chapter write about the training's relevance to both individual school and district needs.

The narratives are:

35. Setting District Goals: Mission Impossible?
36. School Climate: Product of Choice Not Chance
37. From Complacency To Shared Vision Thanks To CSLA
38. Mission And Vision: The Process Is Important
39. Creating A Vision For Instructional Excellence
40. Developing A District-Wide Mission
41. Establishing A School Mission And Slogan

SETTING DISTRICT GOALS: Mission Impossible?

Six months after our school board set in motion a comprehensive planning process and three months after a hard-won victory, I learned that what had appeared to be a serious struggle of wills was really a colossal misunderstanding! I learned about it by writing this case. When my region's ATC case writers gathered to review each other's cases, one of my district's administrators was in my review group. After hearing my case, he pulled me aside for what turned out to be a good laugh along with some new understanding. This is my case then and now.

I have been a school board member for five years. Our district has five elementary schools, an intermediate school, a comprehensive high school and a continuation school for a student population of 4,000. Two-hundred teachers are supported by 200 classified employees to serve the diverse educational needs of the students in our community. As a board, we have been an active and committed group, with a desire to achieve excellence, increase communication with administrators and faculty, encourage curriculum alignment, and focus attention on improved student performance. We were also willing to increase our involvement if necessary to make our commitments reality.

The hallmark of the board's commitment is a comprehensive planning process that has been introduced throughout the organization with varying degrees of sophistication. It requires that action plans be in place at every school site. Each district office administrator writes an annual action plan, and the board designs and implements an action plan to complement the district's goals. This planning process begins after the board approves district focus objectives for the school year.

Setting the District's Focus Objectives

The planning process that results in focus objectives begins in January with the board of trustees reviewing the district's philosophy, goals, quality indicators and the previous year's focus objectives. At that time, the district's administrative council also reviews these items along with assessment and evaluation data on student progress and achievement. The administrative council then considers possible areas for district-wide focus, establishes priorities, and recommends objectives to the Trustees.

The board reviews the administrative council's recommendations, and seeks input from the community and parents. When satisfied that the objectives are in line with school and community goals, the Trustees adopt them, a decision that sets in motion the next phase of district and school goal-setting. By September, each school has developed specific action plans for each focus objective, along with strategies to integrate the objectives into site action plans. Administrators

and teachers continually monitor and adjust strategies as they implement the site plans. By the following January, we are prepared for a next review of goals, strategies and outcomes.

Last year, in January, the board approved the planning process and expected to receive three or four focus objectives for review and adoption at the next meeting. In early February, we received draft recommendations: 23 objectives were submitted for approval! The superintendent and administrative council or (so I thought) decided that all were major tasks that the school district needed to accomplish during the year.

Planning Realities

I had been trained in setting mission and goals at the ATC. I knew that an organization that diffused its energy on 23 focus objectives would not be successful at improving student performance. I challenged the wisdom of the recommendation. The resulting conversation with the superintendent was intense and disconcerting. Reassured by the ATC module, it took all of my conviction that I was right, along with a deep concern for the success of our schools, to muster the courage to challenge the superintendent's recommendations. I was determined to settle for nothing less than reconsideration. The draft went back to the administrative council.

Focus objectives again appeared on the late February board agenda. This draft had pared the recommendations down to 19 -- still an unacceptably high number. I felt I had not communicated my understanding of the purpose of goals as I had learned at ATC. I understood that focus objectives should aid the decision-making process by establishing priorities. Focus objectives were to allow the organization to do just that -- <u>focus</u> our energy, resources and activities. Setting too many means that no single item will receive the attention needed to bring about real curricular or instructional change. I saw the chances of increased student performance dwindle along with my hope for fewer focus objectives.

Before the next board meeting, I formulated my position and reviewed the module *Establishing Your School's Mission and Goals* for reinforcement. We have a bright, articulate superintendent who is able to hold his own if he believes he is right. With tenacity as my ally, I was undaunted. I knew I was right to ask for fewer objectives. For the sake of a successful school year, I needed to defend my position, articulate my reasons and logically demonstrate the benefits of four or five focus objectives -- without alienating the superintendent.

Laying the foundation for this second round seemed important. To increase my chances of being heard, I approached the superintendent ahead of time, expressing my concerns and dedication to this issue. I

suggested that we talk about the issue outside of the board meeting, if that would be appropriate. I called out my reserves. Cajoling augmented by charm, tact and wit produced the decision that the board meeting would be the best forum for this conversation.

The discussion was intense, long and exhausting. Again, we sent the recommendations back to administrative council. Throughout the discussion I stood firm, painfully aware that the superintendent's ego and a positive board relationship were high stakes. However, the real risk was the health of the educational organization. Twenty-three or 19 focus objectives were simply unhealthy. Were we setting a pattern? I figured that if the focus objectives were reduced by four each time they appeared on the board agenda we had a chance of having a manageable number by the end of June.

Could it be a victory? By the late March board meeting, the number of focus objectives had been dropped to four. As it turned out, it was only a partial victory. Along with four focus objectives, there were seven district-wide tasks and five major tasks for particular individuals. After some discussion about this strategy and whether or not this compromise would be beneficial for students or the organization, I agreed to vote for the plan. I had been as assertive as was politically wise or socially acceptable. It wasn't a clear-cut victory, but I had made a difference -- so I thought.

In Retrospect

In fact, because of my insistence on limiting the number of objectives, we now have some guidelines for decision-making for next year. Budget expenditures, resource allocations, administrative time and teacher energy can focus on four major objectives that the district endorsed. These goals reflect our instructional priorities and allow district office staff to plan how to distribute their time appropriately to support our priorities. I learned how to communicate my vision for the school district and to insist on a fair hearing. I learned that there is a magic chemistry in undertaking delicate negotiations, and that it requires being right, articulate, research-grounded and tenacious.

I suspected that there would be less frustration in the district because site administrators would be asked to focus on four issues rather than 23. The allocation of resources should also be easier because we have already reached consensus on the instructional priorities of the district. The staff should be easier to commend for their efforts because we have an agreed-upon outcome, and the board knows what successful behavior looks like.

I believe that I was exerting symbolic leadership by insisting on a responsible plan. In a sense, I was protecting and caring for the members of the organization by ensuring that the expectations of the

staff did not significantly extend beyond the resources available to accomplish the objectives. I insisted that we do a few things well, assess our accomplishments, and then move into other areas. By having realistic objectives, I helped to reduce the frustration that comes through from diffused energy. I had a sense of satisfaction in knowing that my contribution may allow others to function more successfully.

The Rest of the Story

I gave myself too much credit for influencing the direction of the district. Unknown to me, 15 administrators were advocating a limited number of focus objectives all along. That is what I learned after I presented my case. Chagrined and embarrassed, I'll never forget my district administrator's reaction to my perspective on these events. He was convinced that the board was uncompromisingly committed to 23 objectives!

Although it is not politically wise or practically feasible for board members to seek principals' support while mounting an assault on the superintendent's idea, having a better sense of this information would have been helpful. The superintendent and board abide by written and unwritten codes of conduct that shape behavior and define organizational norms. While it is audacious to launch a frontal assault on the superintendent's idea or program, it is suicidal to seek administrative support for the attack. I may pride myself in demonstrating bravery, but a martyr I am not.

My ATC administrative colleague has taught me to be more astute in assessing attitudes of others. Perhaps a simple conversation about goals with an administrator would have been the catalyst needed to bring about a broader discussion of focus objectives -- that kind of joint problem solving would have eliminated the focus objective ping-pong game that ensued.

What first appeared to be adept application of my ATC training became an example of how strongly cultural norms can undermine the best intentions and attitudes of "how things are done around here." Perhaps the real victory is that a board member and an administrator could laugh over "focus objective ping-pong" and learn that they shared a similar perspective. Certainly, the formulation of next year's focus objectives will be different. ATC has provided us with a common language and common perspective. Dialogue, checking for understanding and sharing perspectives will precede the formulation of future focus objectives.

SCHOOL CLIMATE
Product of Choice Not Chance

Ours is a small rural K-8 district with an ADA of less than 200 children. The instructional and auxiliary team comprises a certified staff of ten and a support staff of nine. While employed by a county office of education, I was assigned to fill in as administrator at a local school where the administrator changed jobs before the school year ended. During my tenure as the fill-in, it became evident that school climate and staff morale needed attention. There was a lack of trust between the teachers and administration, between the board and teachers, and between the administration and teachers. Student morale was low; the kids sensed unrest. The lack of trust permeated the school and community.

Sides were being drawn. Teachers, administrators and parents were finger pointing: "It's his fault." "It's their fault." In my prior years as an administrator I had seen repeatedly that a positive environment for teaching and learning could be created with careful groundwork and consistent application. Tackling this school's problems became a challenge to me. When the vacancy was advertised, I applied for the superintendent/principal position. I was hired! I was determined that my school would be a safe place where all children could learn.

It was my responsibility to make this happen. I had to lay the ground rules for all activities and communications. As the instructional leader, I knew "If it is to be, it is up to me." I also felt that the entire staff — indeed the entire community — needed to share this commitment if we were to succeed in establishing a positive school climate.

I know that the foundation for an effective mission statement begins with all those who meet children on a daily basis: teachers, custodians, bus drivers, cooks, aides, etc. I call this the school family. My first task was to meet with the school family and establish a realistic mission statement, a statement of the district's goals and educational vision. I did that. Then I discussed district goals and objectives based on our mission statement with my board. They supported us. Using memos, letterheads, newsletters, business cards, letters home and news releases, I began saturating the community with the central theme of our mission statement. "ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN!"

The process was contagious. Most people wanted to be positive about our school. My task was to help them see ways that they could "buy in."

The immediacy of the turn-around in school climate and student self-image was a total surprise. We were prepared to spend weeks or even months working toward our goal before seeing results. When results began to show, literally within days, we were amazed and motivated toward even stronger methods. Our emphasis on raising community awareness led to a community partnership in the

learning process. Over a dozen child/community-oriented projects have been initiated during this school year. Long range planning has been completed for the next school year. And all projects comply with the district mission statement. The school site council plays a vital role in supplementing school programs with CPR and first aid training, AIDS awareness campaigns, and other timely sessions.

How did we accomplish this? By doing what we said we should do. Finding the good qualities in children. Telling children often that they are capable. Teaching by word and action that a person's worth is not measured by achievement levels or physical attractiveness, but rather by inner qualities. Letting children know we provide a safe environment to learn. Always presenting alternative solutions, not just problems. Teaching children to encourage one another by our example. Teaching pride in making a best effort. Demonstrating fairness, honesty, kindness and tolerance.

Specifically, we used a few tried and true methods to build staff and community support. Some examples:

Specific Measures

The "Ten Minute Ticker." At a staff meeting, each staff member is asked to list specific items relating to a specific topic. (Example: How do you modify curriculum for the handicapped learner in the regular classroom?) Use three minutes for the listing process. After the initial data gathering of three minutes, have the staff next take seven minutes to list ideas that have proven effective.

Any topic will work with the "Ten Minute Ticker". Use butcher paper, a chalk board, or any creative space for your listing. After ten minutes have the list typed and distributed to the group for future reference. Throughout, use as many staff members as possible. Encourage staff to request a "Ten Minute Ticker" for assistance in solving a problem or getting ideas. Be creative. One caution: Do not stretch the ten minutes into a longer session. You will kill the effectiveness.

Using computer generated positive slogans that reinforce students' self worth is very effective in enhancing climate change. Computer banners placed at different locations about the building and/or banners on the bottom sides of the district bus fleet surround students with positive expectations and support. Examples: "All Children Can Learn!" "At (school name) Learning is Fun!"

Send positive messages in student-generated assemblies. Involve cheerleaders, team participants, coaches, teachers, a featured classified employee, popular local dignitaries (selectively chosen) — in other words, the complete school community.

Feature a staff member in the school newsletter or bulletin. A pat on the back is always uplifting.

Invest in a certificate maker. For most computers you can now buy a certificate maker program. Use certificates for any area that enhances school climate, from birthdays to academic achievement. To receive a certificate personally or in the presence of a group is encouraging and a positive plug for the school, too.

Use bumper stickers carry school climate to the outside world. "I am a proud (school name) Parent," "All Children Can Learn," and perhaps "School Is Cool" carry your message.

Walls Have More than Ears: a personal favorite. Any school can turn hallway walls in to one continuous bulletin board for displaying pupil progress. If established tradition is too heavily weighted toward preserving paints, then consider alternatives such as cork sections or commercial bulletin boards mounted to the wall or burlap wall coverings. The idea is to create the means to display pupil achievements, art work or recreational projects. Students, parents and guests thoroughly enjoy seeing their art work, class work, or special accomplishments displayed. Identify the space as the Student Wall of Fame. Encourage older students to set the example. Try assigning a topic monthly and tie the Wall of Fame to a specific curriculum area to reinforce any variety of desired outcomes. When I'm asked about the quality of our school, I suggest to parents that they listen to the story the walls have to tell.

Our Satellite Library

Another step in providing a positive school climate was to contract with the county office of education to establish a satellite library at our school. The school provides the space; the county office provides the books. Since we had no funds to staff the library, parent volunteers stepped in. We sent a memo sharing the need for volunteer help and the class schedule to parents and asked for their help. Now parents enjoy being involved. Grandparents or foster grandparents are also an excellent source of help. In our rural area, opening the library in the evenings for study and recreational reading purposes has become excellent public relations. High schoolers who are bused miles to the nearest town for school have a local source of reference and study materials.

FROM COMPLACENCY TO SHARED VISION – THANKS TO CSLA

My school's mission statement is certainly not revolutionary or unique. It represents a benchmark along the path to becoming an effective school. Most important to me, it represents a change in attitude and behavior for me and my staff – a change that definitely benefits students.

My fifteen-year-old K-3 school of around 500 students had become complacent. I was the third principal, the first to come from outside the site staff. There was a stable faculty of nearly ten classroom teachers and four specialists. Test scores had been declining. The staff had not responded to the changing population and the different needs of the current students. Excuses were made: lack of parental support, increased AFDC, too much television and the lack of proper preparation for school. The community still identified with the school and had high expectations for students and staff. They were actively involved in the home and school club, as classroom volunteers (approximately 150 volunteers helped in one way or another), and in our school site council.

I had been participating in a workshop on school effectiveness to learn more of the research and trends in good practice. I wanted to help the staff look at the school from a fresh perspective. I decided to use the SIP program review needs assessment as leverage, in particular, the parent and teacher survey process. I wanted our fresh perspective to be grounded in actual school survey data and effective schools research, to avoid rehashing old excuses like: "I'm a good teacher, the students just aren't trying, they don't care." The staff and the school site council agreed that we should participate in the school effectiveness program to help prepare for the SIP program review.

I selected key planners from each grade level, one hostile teacher, one negative teacher, one supporter, and two non-committed teachers. The grouping reflected the general make-up of the staff. Information from parent and staff questionnaires provided us with a profile of our school. And there were some surprises. The staff survey indicated underlying disagreements and discontent among various factions in spite of our site norm for staff harmony and maintaining the status quo.

The planners and I went to a three-day training to help us use the data. The workshop facilitators helped us recognize the school's need for collaborative decision making and for a mission statement. Collaboration was not a strength in my leadership style, but I was committed to exploring this if I could get the staff to become more accountable for student achievement and to improve school programs that were not meeting the needs of the students. So, we introduced a collaborative process to develop a mission statement. This would allow us to explore and define our relatively new relationship. (I was in my second year as principal at this site.)

By chance, this process meshed nicely with my CSLA training. When we got to the module on Vision I began to formulate what I needed to do to get our collaborative work underway. Once we were in the module on mission, I was ready to begin. With the teacher planners I laid out the format for a SIP inservice day and delegated roles and responsibilities. I was learning to share power, to let go to obtain the desired results.

We began the inservice by using CSLA materials such as the Perfect Star activity, discussed how each person's perception can be different, and how things sometimes get in the way of seeing what we want to see. We then reviewed the CSLA mission statement and school effectiveness clear school mission material and broke up into three cooperative reading groups with two key planners in each group to read articles on SB 813. Using this background, the teachers wrote their vision of what kind of student they wanted to help develop, then formed helping trios using the CSLA technique of one sharing while others listen. They talked with one another about obstacles that prevented them from reaching their vision and offered suggestions for overcoming the obstacles. This activity went a long way toward establishing a shared trust among the staff as to what we were about as a school team.

As a group, we reviewed the group discussions and brainstormed what we wanted our students to be like when they left our school. Planners recorded on chart paper all the shared ideals based on what we had read, discussed and shared that morning. Then we started grouping common elements. At this point, we agreed that the planners should formulate a mission statement that reflected our group emphasis on academic, social and cultural goals for students. We wrote a rough draft, presented it to the staff, discussed and refined it and presented it to our school site council for approval.

Collaboration Worked

We reproduced the mission statement on 18x25 posters and mounted it in every classroom, library, office, cafeteria, custodial room, nurse's office, staff room - any place we would need a reminder of why we were at the school. Parents received a copy with an explanation. In grade level meetings, teachers talked about how to teach the concepts to the students. A committee planned a mission celebration. Each student wrote on a slip of paper what they were proud of about the school with an invitation to come and visit our school. This was attached to a helium balloon. Parents and the press came to the balloon release. The following day we made front-page headlines with a quarter-page picture and description of our mission and process.

The results of this activity have been great. There is a feeling among staff of a closer shared philosophy and focus. We now hold grade level meetings on a monthly basis to continue the group sharing,

discussion, and collaboration, and we have fewer distractions in the meetings, so they feel more productive. Collaboration helped to eliminate some barriers between grade levels, my administration, and some staff. There is a general feeling of ownership for what happened and the processes continue to be used. Problems are now openly discussed, and dissent and disagreement are respected. The hostile teacher has not changed but no longer has the power to stifle new ideas or programs. Many staff members are more open to experimenting and trying new ideas. Staffroom discussions are professional and geared to problem solving.

The mission statement is used to make decisions about budget, programs, allocation of resources and personnel and site policies. It is part of the parent handbook. There have been frequent positive comments from the community and visitors to our school about the mission statement. Our formal school review team commended us for it - and for the collaborative process that brought it about. In my next assignment, if a mission statement is not in place I certainly shall have no hesitation about repeating the process. I have learned to trust my staff to work collaboratively, to be accountable for their actions and to be open to looking at themselves and changing what ought to be changed to better meet the needs of our students. And I have been able to see my vision become more a reality by changing my way of approaching problems and introducing change.

MISSION AND VISION: The Process Is Important

I am a second-year principal at a school that has about 40 staff members, 25 of whom are certified employees. Most of those people have been on the staff for at least eight years. Over 550 students are enrolled in the school, and we are a magnet for the GATE program and two special education classes for the communicatively handicapped. We serve are economically and ethnically diverse families.

In the 10 years before my arrival there had been two principals: one for eight years and one for two years. These two people brought different strengths to the school but they also operated very differently. The staff had become somewhat fragmented in the transition between the two. When I began my tenure as principal, I felt that some team building was necessary and the best way to do that would be to develop a vision and mission statement.

I met with each teacher individually to ask what they felt the strengths of the school were, what they felt needed improvement, and what else they wanted me to know. Using CSLA training as a model, we adopted a motto, "Excellence in Effort." This motto became our temporary mission and vision statement.

In the following year, we began work in teams to develop a more complete mission and vision statement. I presented a list of belief statements about ourselves and statements about children that I had heard from individual staff members.

The teams had difficulty relating to the list of statements. The team members began to argue at length about the semantics of the statements. It became impossible to get by all the possible semantic interpretations, even though none by itself was extreme. For example, one statement was: We believe that people do the best they know how to do if they fall short from lack of information or skill, not from lack of desire. As a result of the staff difficulties, I decided to utilize the key school planners who had been chosen to be school culture representatives. These members met to begin the process of identifying a mission statement and the actions that would to support that statement. These were shared with the entire staff. People immediately felt comfortable that the team's work was representative of their own feelings.

I was surprised that people had so much difficulty with the initial set of statements and that these same people eventually dealt with these same statements with ease. In looking back, I realized that I had omitted the process step of having people identify their individual vision statements. I had rushed on instead to the shared vision. This truncated process almost killed the potential benefits. If I were to do this again, I would spend more time on the process and allow the content to take care of itself.

CREATING A VISION FOR INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

By the end of my first year as the principal of a large elementary school, I felt I had developed a level of trust with my staff, but I had not yet succeeded fully in improving the school climate and strengthening the instructional program. We weren't in bad shape. Morale among students and staff was generally good. The school boasted often of our many parent volunteers and supportive community. Most of the folks around the school were considered hard and dedicated workers. However, it seemed that everyone was still working in isolation. Efforts were fragmented; people were used to doing their own thing.

Going into my second year, I was determined not to settle for less than a truly exceptional school. Thanks to the CSLA module, *Creating a Vision for Instructional Excellence*, I got a handle on how to proceed. The importance of communicating my vision came to me loud and clear when I read in CSLA materials the quotation from Warren Bennis and Burt Nanas: "Clear vision comes from a profound understanding of an organization. The visionary leader can see what the end product looks like and what must be done to achieve it. In contrast, simply following a set of instructions without vision will never create superior results." I realized that, while I had an idea of what I wanted the school to be, I had done very little to articulate my dream to others.

I used my CSLA training as an icebreaker at my very first staff meeting of the year. The activity called for me to ask all teachers to write one-word answers to a set of very specific questions on slips of tagboard. The questions were: How will students be treated by adults in the school? What will be expected from the students? What will students learn or be prepared to do? How will students feel about going to school? How will people "see your vision in action?"

Before we began, I explained to teachers that this was an activity I had gone through in my CSLA training, and I found it valuable in helping me focus on the vision I had to improve our school. I told them I wanted to share this vision with them. To my surprise, the teachers treated this task very seriously. You could hear a pin drop as they carefully thought about their answers. I heard none of the usual cracks or flippant remarks that one gets when working with a large group who were fairly comfortable with each other.

As in CSLA training, I had placed large charts on the walls around the room on which were drawn large pots with a question printed in bold letters at the bottom. The teachers were amazed to see how much alike their one-word answers were. They had used words like respect, caring, trust, self-esteem - the very words I had used in the CSLA exercise. Next, we grouped the words and made sentences that would indicate what our school would look like if we could

achieve all the concepts we had listed. After our discussion of the sentences, my vision had become our vision. We concluded by developing a mission statement.

Because the activity was so well received, this same exercise was repeated for the support staff and parents. I invited teachers to conduct the exercise in their classrooms with students. (The one-word answers made the task a little more difficult for students.) We included the district administrative staff and the school board. Now I use it each year as a way to include new teachers in our vision and to remind the returning staff how much alike we still are.

DEVELOPING A DISTRICT-WIDE MISSION

I am the Director of Special Services, responsible for all of my district's special education programs, support services, and pupil personnel areas. After my first year of ATC, I decided to work with our psychologists to develop a mission statement for the special services department. We spent a day together going through the entire process as I had learned it, and the eight of us came up with a very powerful mission statement. Delighted, I decided to move ahead and work with the entire school district on the mission and goal process. As a district cabinet member, I had the leverage to proceed.

Our district's board of trustees adopts goals each year which included budget priorities as well as school and district program emphases. I was now aware that the board, the cabinet, and the district management team did not have a mission statement common to all; nor did we have the same vision of where our district was heading. I knew our problem was not unique. We tend to see our mission from our particular seat in the organization. For example, I tended to write goals from the special services perspective, rather than from the standpoint of what would be best for all children.

I approached the assistant superintendent and asked if I could take the cabinet through the mission and goal-setting process of ATC. I asked him first because I needed his total support. An exercise such as this had not been done before, and since it involved revealing personal feelings and attitudes, I realized that having my immediate supervisor involved was imperative in order to build trust.

He was very much in favor, and we spent an entire morning on the process. The cabinet was receptive, and quickly came up with three mission statements. I felt that my goal for arriving at several mission statements, later to be combined into one statement, was met. The superintendent preferred to give the board these statements to synthesize instead of handing them a pre-determined one.

The mission statement process was such a positive experience for the cabinet that the superintendent asked me to repeat it with our district advisory committee (our parent component) and the curriculum support committee (our teacher component). The district management team also developed mission statements. The ground rules required the members of each group to respect all opinions offered. There were no right or wrong answers. Participants were encouraged to pass if they did not have a comment to offer. Knowing that their comments were not going to be judged made them feel free to respond.

I had not anticipated such success. The groups were extremely positive and willing to be a part of the process. The results were also very similar. We took examples from each group to the board. After explaining the process we had followed, we asked the board to set their own priority goals, based on the mission statements. They did.

My only regret is that I didn't take the board entirely through the process. They did not have the full opportunity to brainstorm, synthesize, or set priorities. They would have enjoyed it and profited from the opportunity to be team players rather than spectators. We plan to use their annual retreat next year to take them through the process. I think we'll all benefit, because I fully believe this to be one of the best team building exercises around.

ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL MISSION AND SLOGAN

The leadership team at my large, multi-cycle, year round elementary school decided that we needed a mission statement and slogan. We had been working on many different school improvement factors – improving ESL instruction, test taking skills, discipline, student self-esteem (through incentive programs and recognition), and staff morale – and we had a vision of where we were going. What we didn't have was a way to bring the vision alive for the community, students and staff. Hence, the decision to formulate a mission statement.

Full staff meetings are rare at the school because of our varying vacation schedules. But on this we wanted full staff input so that everyone would feel a connectedness. We started with the faculty advisory council. Teachers from all calendar cycles and each grade level were represented on it, and its size was manageable–about 20 people.

At a faculty advisory council meeting I introduced the concept and purpose of a mission statement. Using an overhead projector, we brainstormed using the following prompt: "Describe the perfect school." All members spoke and their responses were recorded. Teachers were very enthusiastic during this part of the activity. We circled some descriptors that were particularly pertinent to our school. After I shared the sample mission statement that I had developed at in my CSLA training, we developed the following statement:

The staff, students and parents are committed to providing and supporting an effective academic program which provides strong emphasis on the basic skills and oral language development. The students are encouraged to use creativity and higher level thinking skills. Excellence is encouraged in academic areas, attendance and citizenship. We are also committed to providing a safe learning environment and establishing our school as a place were we develop cooperation, pride and self-esteem.

Since our mascot is a "Flyer" our slogan is Flyers Soar To Excellence. The teachers printed this on computer banners and signs and posted them prominently in classrooms and hallways throughout the school. We included both the statement and slogan in the staff handbook. I was surprised by the enthusiasm and involvement of teachers. I plan to present the mission statement again to the faculty and see if they feel changes are necessary. I also plan to publicize the mission statement and slogan throughout the school and community. In sum, CSLA provided me with a great tool for helping the staff and students recognize our common commitment.

VIII. RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Three narratives share learning about using parents and community supports effectively. The narratives are diverse and suggest only a few of the many issues concerning school-community partnerships.

The narratives are:

42. A Penny Saved, A Library Earned

43. Students Adopt A Grandparent And Gain A New Lease On Learning

44. Negotiating A Link Between Native American Families and School

A PENNY SAVED A LIBRARY EARNED

My small, rural elementary school places high value on the importance of a school library. With no library nearby, parents and staff built over the years a library collection of 3,000 books and reference materials for a student population of 100. The library is an important resource for the community as well as the school. In the last few years, state library funds have been barely sufficient to replace lost or obsolete books. By the time I arrived as the newly appointed teaching principal, eighty percent of the non-fiction books had ten-year-old copyrights. I decided to make the library a focus for school improvement. Having high quality reading books would not only motivate students to read, it would provide a unifying culture-building activity. But I needed a source of funds.

I had read in a recent report that donations make up the major portion of school library budgets. One school reported that donations represented sixty-two percent of their library budget. I decided to raise the possibility of fundraising to improve the library collection with staff and community supporters. They were very receptive to the idea.

I first learned of the idea to save pennies in a news story which reported that six billion pennies were discarded and lost each year. I was enticed to learn more. From a report by the United States Mint, I learned that one third of all Americans had at least $10.00 worth of pennies saved at home. The idea for "The Penny Fundraising Project" was formed. I had found a fundraiser which could shape the values and beliefs of my school, improve the library, and emphasize the importance of reading.

At my first staff and parent meetings, I announced that we would be starting a fundraising campaign to raise 1 million pennies during the school year. (So much for collaborative decision making!) Little did I know that this ambitious one year goal was impossible within my small school and community; nor did I realize that my teaching staff and parent leaders thought the idea, while creative, pretty farfetched.

The person who did believe was the school secretary. Bolstered by her enthusiasm, I forged ahead. Only when pennies began adding up to real dollars were teachers and parents persuaded of the potentials of penny saving. Local and regional media coverage of our efforts also helped convince them.

Our fundraising campaign is now a driving force behind my school's culture. Students, parents, grandparents, business and community leaders, friends-of-the-library and teachers are all involved. During the first year of the campaign, 125 different contributors have donated an average of $20.00 or 2,000¢ to the library fund, considerably less than my one year, one million pennies target, but a substantial

amount, nevertheless. This broad involvement and support is the force that is guiding our school's mission to promote student learning and binds our organizational culture.

Specifics of the Campaign

Saving pennies to purchase school library books is easy. The one-hundred elementary students at my school have collected 250,000 or $2,550 during the first year of what is now a four year campaign to raise 1,000,000 pennies. Penny contributions arrive at school by mail and by students and adults carrying boxes, socks, bags, and cans filled with pennies. Most contributions have been in coin.

Pennies are a part of the curriculum. We feature pennies in language, math and science activities. When our first 20,000 pennies had been counted, students estimated the height and weight of one million of them. They estimated the length of one million pennies side to side and the number of water drops that will fit on a penny. We conducted research on penny history, performed "A Penny for Your Thoughts" as our spring play, highlighting the life of Abraham Lincoln. The student-published "Penny Express" is a four-page newsprint tabloid about the campaign. In the works are a penny pitching contest and a school-community Penny Carnival. To date, the penny campaign has netted us one hundred new library books and an ongoing penny fund. One hundred and twenty five "Friends of the Library" have signed on for our four-year campaign. Most important to me, our school culture as well as our school library is enriched.

STUDENTS ADOPT A GRANDPARENT AND GAIN A NEW LEASE ON LEARNING

I am an assistant principal at a continuation high school of about 300 students of all ability levels. All of these students are at-risk of failing and most share a feeling of low self-worth. I am acutely aware of students' feelings of low self-esteem because I deal with student problems daily. Many of these teenagers suffer both physical and mental abuse, and all of them are branded failures by the regular comprehensive high schools. Enrollment at our school alone earned students the sobriquet, "Flake".

I started with what I know about these youngsters. They need an opportunity to be valued by outsiders, preferably adults; but teenagers often have trouble relating to adults in the 30 to 50 year old age group. Teens are struggling for independence, and adults between the ages of 30 and 50 represent authority figures or job competitors. However, teens can be compassionate with senior citizens who pose no threat to their independence. My hunch was that older adults could help my students gain self-worth, and my students could help these older people who are hospitalized, have no visitors, and need a friend.

After consulting several community leaders, I determined that my first task was to ask the director of the neighborhood convalescent hospital if the hospital would allow a limited number of continuation high students to "adopt a grandparent" from among those patients who would enjoy a weekly visitor. During a one hour visit, students would entertain their adopted grandparent as allowed by the patient's medical situation. Student and senior citizens would be matched by interest, sex, or other criteria determined by the hospital director.

I hoped that senior citizens would accept the student friend for what he was, and validate him as a person of worth.

My second task was to determine student interest. To reach students I used the tried-and true teen communication network, telling three students to tell anyone interested to see me and sign up. My wait was short. In two days, I had 40 students signed up and more on the waiting list. If they agreed to adopt a grandparent, they would have "parental responsibility;" they could not disappoint their adopted grandparents. If they failed to follow the program's requirements, they would not be allowed to participate. Further the student had to attend school to qualify.

Next I met with the faculty and explained the program: that once a week, during different class periods, 40 students would walk up the street to the hospital, and each student would miss only one hour of class a month. The visits would be on a rotating schedule between 9 am and 1 pm so that students could help alternately with a patient's exercise or lunch.

The faculty agreed to the plan. I now had 40 plus students signed up to participate. All I needed was parental permission. I sent permission slips home, explaining that they must be returned in three days, or the student would be replaced with someone from our growing waiting list. All permission slips came back on time.

The program was a success. Students attended school in order to participate. Those who graduated or transferred back to comprehensive high schools were replaced with someone on the waiting list. Students felt good about doing something for someone else. The appreciation of both adopted grandparents and hospital staff made them feel needed. As anticipated, many students visited their adopted grandparents after school hours or during weekends. Some had never before had an adult friend from whom they could learn. As an extra bonus, several students were offered full time employment at the hospital after they graduated. My vision was realized: *Students in the adopt-a-grandparent program gained self-worth.*

Can Others Try Such A Program?

One difficulty in planning such out-reach programs is that continuation schools are often not within walking distance of community facilities. Our success suggests that districts may want to relocate continuation schools that are in neighborhoods inaccessible to walk-to programs. The extraordinary payoff in reclaimed human potential is certainly worth the number of meetings it might take to relocate the schools.

I also know that continuation students need many out-reach programs to help validate their worth as people. Other possibilities include tutoring in elementary or intermediate schools, donating time to senior citizen centers, working on community beautification projects, or working with police on anti-drug campaigns. Such programs give the teenager a connection to the community, sense of societal ownership, and ultimately, a feeling of pride and self-worth.

NEGOTIATING A LINK BETWEEN NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES AND SCHOOL

My community is a rural and isolated, four hours from the nearest four-year academic institution. The economy is based on people business (tourism, service facilities), government workers (city, federal, county) and a small amount of agriculture and mining. Demographically, we have a well-off white population mostly without school age children, a small middle class, a growing number of poor, semi-transient blue collar workers, a growing number of Mexican-Americans, and a stable Native American population concentrated on a reservation. Because of that population, federal impact aid funds are a significant part of the district income.

The certificated personnel in our schools, many of whom are longtimers, embody the essence of school and community culture. This year, we have been able to employ a Native American as a teacher. I am the middle school principal, having served as a teacher, and associate principal at the elementary, intermediate and middle school levels.

A view of local attitudes may be helpful here. A portion of the Native American population feels that whites view them as second class citizens. And in fact some of the white population do hold the view that Native Americans in our community are parasites unable or unfit to hold jobs, lacking motivation, and abusive of alcohol and drugs. The student population at the school reflects that of the town as a whole. The school receives strong parent support and involvement from the white population. Native American parents are hesitant to interact with the school, not sold on the apparent school values or the system the school represents.

With help from CSLA's training on *Involving Parents as Partners in Promoting Student Learning*, I undertook to change the Native American attitude about school and to improve teachers' attitudes and expectations for Native American students. I was determined to increase the positive participation of Native American parents in school, and thereby increase the overall performance of Native American students.

Such action was long overdue. The number of Native American student retentions was too high. One in seven students retained in our upper elementary grades was Native American. Native American parents were very negative when contacted by the school. The students' CAP scores were low, consistently below the white average in the district, and below the state average for other Native American students. A disproportionate number of our Native American students were enrolled in special education classes. Others were reported to be chronic discipline problems. Teachers were ignorant of, and in some cases insensitive toward, Native American culture and students. In short, an overall cloud of racial prejudice among various ethnic groups hung over our community.

Stereotyping is Pervasive

Two incidents may help to explain the scope of the problem. One of our relatively new teachers was having discipline problems with elementary school children who happened to be Native American. Frustrated that they talked back when he asked them not to chew gum, he brought four of them into the school office and had them sit in the entry room while he stepped into the doorway of the principal's office. In view and hearing range of the students, he reported to the principal that he was sick and tired of taking back-talk from Woo Woos. Perplexed, the principal asked him what a Woo Woo was. He put his hand to his mouth and said, "You know, Woo Woos, " and went "Woo, Woo, Woo" in the stereotypical way in which Indians chant in cartoons.

The counterpoint: a Native American student ran away from school mid-afternoon one day. Unable to contact the parent because there was no phone at home, the principal made a home visit to inform the parent of his concern regarding the student's disappearance. Upon entering the house, he saw the student, the parent, and the student's school age brother all seated on the couch watching the television, eating snacks. The parent was drinking beer.

The Problem Won't Self-Heal

These anecdotes suggest how easily stereotyping in both white and Native American communities is reinforced -- why some Native American parents reject school values, why some whites generalize particular situations to all Native Americans, and how the lack of positive parent support for Native American students has led to unacceptable academic performance. I was faced with a problem that clearly would not self-heal. It had been traditional in the school district for many years. I determined to try to bring about change. Using ideas gleaned from CSLA, I went to work.

On the reservation there is a Native American Study Center where students can work after school on areas of remediation or general homework. My first step was to establish contact with the Native American student tutors, review the profile of students from our school with them, and simultaneously encourage other Native American students from our school to make use of the study center. We agreed that the tutors would prepare special progress reports on the Native American students involved in the study center. I agreed to visit the center on a quarterly basis to review each student's case with them.

Using our district's Title IV Native American Education Program funds, I led efforts to partially redesign our school's program so that our Native American teacher, in addition to helping students at school with remedial problems, could also act as a liaison to bring school and home closer together, make home visits, and work with teachers to help them understand the special needs of our students.

I attended Native American functions on the reservation including ceremonial gatherings and educational lectures. I made home visits to the reservation to talk directly with parents about a student's problems. I wanted to acknowledge students' successes and reinforce their positive actions. I was able to enlist a Native American parent to participate on our school improvement committee. Our school plan incorporated cultural awareness activities that emphasized the values of the culture of our tribe. We planned awareness training for the staff in Native American cultural values, circumstances that reinforce prejudice, and educational strategies that work most effectively with Native American students.

Slow but Steady Removal of Barriers

The Native American parent on our SIP Committee organized a parent night at the Native American Study Center on the reservation. We used materials from CSLA on the four roles of parental involvement (teacher, learner, supporter, advocate/decision maker) examining the differences between positive and negative communication systems, as well as formal and informal ones, that exist in school communities. We also reviewed homework problems and school policy regarding homework.

The barriers between the school and some Native American parents have been removed. We have more open and honest communication. The principal is beginning to be viewed as someone who will listen. But I'm frustrated that I haven't reached many parents in real numbers. The parent night was well advertised but not well attended. I still have a long struggle ahead to make a breakthrough in Native American parent attitudes about the long-term value of education.

I'm still working on the staff. The cultural awareness training has been very valuable for some. Others still feel it inappropriate and a waste of time. I'm going to try a change of approach. Most of my attention has been focused on parents and community activities -- primarily because I assumed the other educators in the school would share my feelings. I now fear too many years of "Indian failures" in school have convinced staff that this is an unchangeable norm.

This project is far from over and far from successful -- at least as I perceive success. Persistence, patience, and insistence on improvement over the years will be the only way to ever change two mountainous attitudes built up over years by ignorance, apathy and prejudice. I hope I have the necessary perseverance.

IX. COPING WITH TRAGEDY

One administrator writes about an extraordinarily difficult year and how she helps her students, staff and school community cope with student deaths. She has provided readers with a bibliography of library books that are particularly helpful for young students dealing with death.

The narrative is:

45. When Tragedy Strikes

WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES

I had been the principal of our elementary school of about 500 children for six months when the crises occurred. We had had some preparation in building a positive culture. Because we had wanted to improve our ability to work with our growing number of students with severe emotional needs, staff had decided on two programs to help us build strong self-esteem in students and staff. Through a special grant , we were able to take two days of training for the Tribes Program in October. Through the two days, the staff learned much about each other, and felt more rapport than they had experienced in recent years. The training consisted of activities designed to help a class build a sense of belonging and inclusion, small group activities for sharing self and listening to others, and application of these techniques to set up cooperative learning groups in classrooms. While some staff were hesitant to adopt the Tribes Program whole-cloth, most included its implementation in their personal goals for the year.

Fortunately, by the time our crises occurred, I had taken the time to assess the school culture. I knew the heroes and heroines, the rites and rituals, and their importance. As the new principal, I continued the ceremonies and rituals that the staff had identified as important, while gradually making them my own. Hugs were an important element in this culture. We all shared hugs with students, freely and often. After the Tribes training I kept promoting inclusion and positive self-esteem, calling attention to good examples whenever I found them in a classroom or on the playground. My goal was to get the staff working collaboratively to create a working organizational structure where they felt included and committed.

Tragedy Strikes

The crises hit in late fall. On Saturday of a long weekend I was called by a staff member who told me she'd heard on the news that one of our primary-grade students had been abducted while vacationing with his family. The case received much publicity that weekend and was a shock to our school community. The abducted student's teacher and I conferred. We were concerned about how to tell the students in the boy's class. I sought advice from a psychologist friend that weekend. She reminded me that young children have a very short attention span and are still quite self-centered. They do not imagine all the possibilities and consequences of a situation like this.

We contacted our volunteer counselor from the local community health services. She met us at the school on Monday morning. We had a brief staff meeting to inform everyone and to alert them to the kinds of questions and concerns students may have. The teacher went with me to the primary classroom where she gathered her children together in a Tribes circle on the floor. She told them about their missing friend. They asked lots of questions, shared what had been said in their families about going with strangers and about what to do in situations like that. They expressed sadness that their friend had been abducted. But soon they were talking about losing a tooth

and about their long weekend. The teacher invited them to write about how they were feeling and started an experience story for them on the chalkboard.

The counselor stayed in the classroom for awhile to talk to children who wanted to ask questions or talk about their friend. I made sure that I was visible and available on the playground at recess. Several students came to talk about the kidnapping with me, and to ask questions about how it happened. Primary age children are much more concrete and specific than older children. They were not imagining what horrible things might be happening to their friend, as we had fearedthey might. Instead, their questions had to do with trying to rationalize why it happened. I was glad I had chosen to be available to them. Some primary-grade girls asked me if their friend might have done something bad. I quickly assured them that his behavior had nothing to do with what happened to him.

The next day, I met with a parent as a follow-up to a child neglect report that I had filed. While we were meeting in my office, the police arrived to arrest her on an outstanding warrant for heroin use. The young child was taken to the children's shelter. I shared this unusual incident briefly at the staff meeting that afternoon. A teacher reported that there had been a sexual attack in the neighborhood the night before, just a block from the school. Neither of these events is common in our school neighborhood. A month earlier, a rapist had attacked at a medical center late in the afternoon about a mile from the school. We cautioned each other to lock classroom doors after school, and to avoid working late at the school alone. Meanwhile, we had been in contact with the abducted child's family. Plans were forming to help with publicity through the Missing Children's Alliance.

The next day we learned that the sexual attack had involved one of our families. In an administrators' meeting at the district office, I was summoned by a phone call from one of my upper-grade teachers. One of his students was reported to be in a coma in the hospital. She had not been ill before the weekend. He wanted to go to the hospital. I immediately arranged for a substitute to take over his class. I shared the series of events with my fellow administrators.

Help from a Grief Counsleor

When I returned to the school at noon, the teacher was just back from the hospital. He had learned that his student had a brain tumor and was not expected to live. He was very upset. I suggested that we again contact the counselor who had been helpful with the primary-grade class. She met us at the school within the hour. She had spent many hours working with patients and families at the Center for Living With Dying, and was an experienced grief counselor. We discussed at length what to tell the upper grade classmates. The counselor advised us to tell them the truth, in a straight forward way

She suggested we should not be optimistic, but also not eliminate hope. She advised against telling them that the student was in a deep sleep; some of the children might construe that to mean it is dangerous to fall asleep -- that you may never wake up.

Our counselor also suggested that we might want to ask the children to write. Writing is a form of action, and can be very therapeutic in a grief situation. We went into the class together and talked with the children. They were cooperating with their substitute teacher, but were quite anxious for news of their friend. We told them of the situation, let them ask questions, and answered them as best we could. I suggested they might want to write to the student. Or they might like to write to her mother about what a special person she is to them. The children wrote for several minutes, quietly wept, and sought hugs. After a while, the teacher took them outdoors for some play time. They all received a hug from me on their way out the door. The teacher returned to the hospital at the end of the school day. He learned that his student had died about an hour earlier.

Our school secretary spent some time with the teacher, consoling him and talking about the children in the class. He told her of the writing the children had been doing. Without exception, the letters told of our deceased student's kindness to others and her friendliness, qualities that the children had admired. Their talk let to the idea of declaring a special Kindness Day in her memory. As part of the day, we agreed to write messages about our lost friend and attach them to helium balloons to be released on Friday as a symbolic gesture of letting our friend go.

I left explanatory messages with the superintendent. Early the next morning he phoned me with sympathy and caring. He had contacted a counseling service that is part of our employee benefits, and gave me the name and phone number of a staff psychologist who was already briefed on the tragedies we were facing. After alerting staff members to the latest news, I went into the upper grade class with the counselor to let the students know the final news of their friend. The teacher shared a beautiful poem he had written about his student. There were lots of tears, and quiet weeping. They talked about their friend, and asked questions.

The psychologist agreed to meet with the staff at the 10 a.m. recess. Meanwhile, the upper-grade teachers alerted me that the older students were not only shocked by the death, but were full of rumors about the sexual attack that had occurred. The children had heard bits and pieces from adult conversations, and had embellished what few facts they had. Our community seemed overwhelmed with loss of stability. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent arrived at recess and took yard duty so that staff could meet with the psychologist.

Teachers were concerned about what to tell the students, and how to answer their questions without frightening them further. They wanted more information on the grieving process, and what to expect from the children. We shared the teacher's poem with the staff. The psychologist reminded us that our security and that of the whole community was threatened by the series of unusual events. People were frightened, and unusual behavior was to be expected. Staff members asked to have more information about the attack.

I contacted the school resource officer at the local police department. He agreed to talk with the older students that afternoon and also put me in touch with the department's Crime Prevention Unit. They scheduled an evening for adults in the community on home security and sexual assault prevention.

Telling Parents

I prepared a letter to send home with students that afternoon. A notice had gone home to the primary-grade class about our student's abduction on Monday. Now, three days later, my letter talked about the three serious events that had taken place, it gave information about each one and offered opportunities for action. It offered the use of school facilities for the meeting with the police department and invited parents to bring their neighbors. I included information about our student's death, talked about Kindness Day, and suggested that parents might want to contact the parents of students in her class to offer support as they tried to help their children deal with this sad event.

The after-school staff meeting included the custodians, clerk, secretary, support staff, and some district administrators. The school resource officer updated the information the staff had about the sexual attack. He reassured them that it was a random attack. The police had the investigation well under way, he said, and there was no reason to panic, though everyone should continue to take precautions. He answered every question in a straightforward way, taking some of the fear and panic out of our week. At the suggestion of the staff, I wrote a summary of the officer's remarks to send home with students the next day.

The psychologist brought some printed material that discussed the phases of grief, as well as emotional, behavioral, and physical responses that are considered normal. She cautioned us to expect bizarre behavior and remarks from children and even from adults. Staff members shared some incidents of this that had already taken place. We all suggested responses that would acknowledge the child's upset, without making him feel put down. We made some plans for the upper-grade classes to participate in Kindness Day. The psychologist advised us that it would be normal for some children to react negatively to this. She also urged us to take good care of

ourselves, and not try to do too much. The special day class teacher gave us some excellent books she had purchased the night before.

I was chilled by a strong wind that came up, and what I thought was a shivering reaction to the cold extended to shaking that would not stop. A staff member insisted on driving me home. I remembered the psychologist's advice and went to bed. I later called my counselor friend and had a cup of hot tea. I contacted some parents who readily agreed to make all the arrangements for the helium and the balloons, and deliver them to the school.

Friday was to be Kindness Day. The upper- grade students polished their letters. Those who wanted to read them on film for the mother did so. The two classes worked together most of the day. Students wrote brief messages on index cards to be attached to the helium balloons. The fifth graders worked in Tribes groups to create large banners declaring Kindness Day and listing special qualities about our deceased friend. Unfortunately, rain forced us to postpone the events until Monday. We passed on the information about the memorial services to the upper-grade students. Several attended.

On Monday the banners were hung on the school walls, and students were invited to sign them whenever they exhibited a behavior described there. The balloons were released near the end of the day. The plastic bags that enclosed the messages added extra weight, and some of the balloons hovered close to the ground instead of soaring. That necessitated combining messages and balloons to send them aloft. That too was in the spirit of the day. All was recorded on film for the deceased student's mother.

Staff at the district offices and at other schools responded to our tragedies too with strong support. The superintendent sent copies of my letter to the parents and the teacher's lovely poem about his student to all district staff. The principal and administrative intern from one school arrived Friday morning with coffee cakes and personal notes from each of their teachers. Another school sent treats to the staff, and a third sent flowers with a thoughtful message. The middle school staff phoned their encouragement and support, and hosted a letter-writing campaign on behalf of the abducted student. One of the principals, a trained volunteer at the rape crisis center, asked me to send a note to the victim of the attack, offering her services and phone number.

There were many contacts from the media. Interest in the abduction was high. I responded to every one, cooperating as fully as possible, hoping to keep our abducted student in the news and increase the chances he would be found. The teacher and I were very protective of the children, however. We shared the students letters but denied interviews with them. A week or so later, we allowed a TV station to

film the class and talk with the teacher when the student's mother visited. The family was seeking opportunities to publicize the missing child, in hopes that ever wider exposure would bring positive results. The FBI interviewed me and the teachers who worked with the student, hoping for clues to his personality that would be helpful in the search. We supported the family as they worked with the National Missing Children Alliance, and the Kevin Collins Foundation. Staff and community included copies of a poster with the child's picture in Christmas cards to friends and relatives across the country.

Meanwhile, the parent club asked if there would be something planned to help parents deal with the crises. I arranged for the psychologist to have a brown bag lunch session with parents; where they expressed their fears and looked for ways to ensure their children's safety. During this school year there was a significant increase in the number of parents who came every afternoon to pick up their children. There was much talking and sharing together for reassurance. The community meeting on home protection and sexual assault prevention was well attended.

About two weeks later, the news carried the story that the abducted student's body had been found just a short distance from where he had disappeared. The return to school was a sad one. The counselor was with us again for the primary-grade children closest to the child. I met with them and their teacher. Most of the children had heard the news from their parents. They asked questions, and we were able to clear up some misunderstandings. They decided to make huge banners about their friend which were put on the walls outside their classroom. Children from all the other classes came to read their messages and look at the pictures they made about playing with their friend.

Media Attention

We were inundated with the media. Every television station wanted to do a story on the school and the student's class. Newspapers covered the school and children too. To their credit, without exception, they treated the children and the story with great sensitivity. Every crew had one member who remarked that they had a child about the student's age, were worried about their own children, or had a connection with staff of a school somewhere. We allowed the children to be interviewed by two television reporters and one from a newspaper and to be photographed showing their banners and writings. After the third interview, the children said, "We don't want to talk to them anymore."

We respected that. I handled the interviews after that. One of the crews came to the CSLA training session that I attended to get a few remarks from me. Another station interviewed the resource specialist whom I had appointed as contact while I was at the training. With

Enough Media Attention

each contact, we invited the crew to come back to do a story when we had some happy events and good news to share. Some valuable contacts were established as a result.

The books we had purchased in the fall were back in use throughout the school as teachers read to their students and tried to help them deal with grief. Students in other classes asked if they could make some banners too. We put up long sheets of butcher paper near the office, and invited the students to draw or write their thoughts and feelings.

We dismissed school early on the day of the memorial service which the family planned in a local park, and invited people to bring a single flower if they wished. Many children came with their parents, as did many, many people in the community. The media covered the event too. I noted a newspaper photographer stopping to dry his eyes so he could take a picture for his story. Our abducted student's classmates joined their teacher near the front. I ordered flowers from a shop where one of the school parents works. She insisted they be a donation from her family. I shared them with staff and students who were there. That cold winter day was our low point of the year.

Events followed to help the healing process. A teacher edited the filmed events honoring the child who died of the tumor and presented a beautiful video to her mother after sharing it with students and staff. The rapist was arrested, and the fear level in the school was reduced. We had training for children in every classroom by the Child Assault Prevention Project. They talked to the staff first, then provided an evening for parents that was well attended. These trained volunteers went to each classroom to talk about and role-play child abuse situations. They gave the children techniques on how to escape from dangerous situations, and rules and guidelines for dealing with strangers. The children began to feel empowered.

Later in the month there was an arrest in the case. We didn't talk about that much at school. The staff discussed it, of course, but the students were not looking for revenge, nor was that encouraged by the parents or the school. In the spring, we planted two redwood trees as living memorials to our lost friends. The weather was beautiful, and the whole school gathered on the playground's grassy area for a short assembly. The families of the students we had lost were there. At the dedication, I reviewed the circumstances and events that had occurred. The mayor spoke, as did the school board president and the superintendent. I was very conscious that this was one of the rites and rituals that shape the school culture. The children were solemn, and attentive to every word. At the end of the dedication, the student council members planted the trees.

The upper-grades invited the primary graders to join the cast if their annual musical and dedicated the production to our lost students. They sang "Somewhere Out There" in memory of their friends. The primary graders communicated the words in sign language.

Plans were finalized for a city memorial to our abducted student. With input from the family, some of the student's drawings were to be shaped into a stained glass window for the children's section of the library. A local glass company donated the stained glass, and engaged an artist to do the window. The window will be dedicated to all the children who have died.

We treat seriously all the posters and flyers and the California Attorney General's books on missing children. They are often put in our office window. Students pour over them, and discuss and speculate about the pictured children. Parents are more careful about picking up their children on time, and knowing where they are. A few of the parents are still very fearful. One whose child was featured in several news stories asked that her daughter not be photographed by the media anymore, she even had the child's hair cut in an attempt to change her looks.

Time Heals

At the end of each year I ask the staff to evaluate my performance. The format is simple and provides me with valuable feedback. I ask them to name three things that I do well or that are going well at the school, three things I need to change or do differently, and things we should focus on for next year. I was overwhelmed by the support expressed on this survey, and the appreciation for the open communication, the recognition for a collaborative organizational structure, and for staff involvement in decision-making. Most of all, there was appreciation for the ongoing mutual support system we had built over the year through Tribes training and ordeal-by-fire. These elements of a positive school climate have impacted the school culture. There was a conscious effort to interpret the diverse actions and events of this school year in terms of the common themes of mutual caring and support. Culture change has taken place, in spite of the initial resistance.

I learned much about helping children and adults deal with death and grieving. It takes time. People need to talk and get questions answered. Thoughts recur, and bring new questions. If children do not feel free to ask, or if they get evasive answers, they can flip into "magical thinking" to provide their own explanations. These often include self messages of "I am bad." We worked it through together. The grief had to be processed within each individual; we had to process it collectively as classroom groups, and as a school. It is important not to assume that students and staff are past the grieving once the initial shock has passed.

BOOKS DEALING WITH DEATH

Primary Level

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf, Buscaglia, Leo. Holt Reinhart Winston, 1982. How Freddie and his companion leaves change with the passing seasons, finally falling to the ground with winter snow, is an inspiring allegory illustrating the delicate balance between life and death.

I had a Friend Named Peter. Cohn, Janice. Morrow, 1987. When Betsy learns about the death of a friend, her parents and teacher answer questions about dying, funerals, and the burial process.

I'll Always Love You. Wilhelm, Hans. Crown, 1985. A child's sadness at the death of a beloved dog is tempered by the remembrance of saying every night, "I'll always love you."

Last Week My Brother Anthony Died, Hickman, Martha Whitmore. Abingdon Press, 1984. A small girl named Julie describes her feelings following the death of her four-week-old brother.

Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children, Mellonie, Bryan and Kingpen, Robert. Bantam, 1983. Everything has a beginning and an ending and living in between.

Mustard, Graeber, Charlotte. Macmillan, 1982. Eight-year-old Alex must accept the fact that his aging cat, Mustard, is developing numerous ailments, and must eventually die.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney, Viorst, Judith. Atheneum, 1971. Upon the death of Barney, the cat, the children hold a funeral and remember good things about his life.

Intermediate Level

Beat the Turtle Drum, Greene, Constance. Yearling, 1979. Kate and her parents struggle to deal with the death of her younger sister.

Bridge to Terabithia, Paterson, Katherine. Crowell, 1977. The life of a ten-year-old in rural Virginia expands when he becomes friends with a newcomer who subsequently meets an untimely death trying to reach their hideaway, Terabithia, during a storm.

Death is Natural, Pringle, Laurence. Four Winds, 1977. A simple discussion of death as it applies to the plant and animal kingdom.

My Brother Sam is Dead, Collier, James Lincoln and Christopher. Four Winds, 1974. A story of death in the Revolutionary War.

So Long, Grandpa, Donnelly, Elfie. Crown, 1981. A ten-year-old Viennese boy describes his close relationship with his seventy-nine year old grandfather and how he copes with the old man's illness and death.

X. *CREATING SUCCESSFUL SUMMER SCHOOLS*

Two author teams share their experiences and offer suggestions for establishing successful summer schools.

The narratives are:

46. A Summer School Success For Junior High School Students

47. A Summer School Model

A SUMMER SCHOOL SUCCESS FOR JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS

This year our summer school was located in one of the most remote areas of the district requiring a long bus ride to and from school. Our district had a large proportion of junior high students who would be enrolling because they had received one or more Fs the previous year. They were our prototypical at-risk students. They had failed in basic classes, were generally unsuccessful in school, and had low self-esteem. We worried that the tedium of long bus rides would far outweigh incentives to attend summer school to raise their grades. We anticipated high attrition. Instead, over 90 percent of the initial 200 junior high students enrolled in summer basic skills classes completed the session with excellent attendance -- the highest rate of the entire 7-12 summer school program. This is our testimony to a teacher-team effort that enticed these young teens to choose summer school over play.

Our resources were not significantly different from those of other districts. Teachers did not ordinarily work in teams and were inexperienced in collegial lesson planning and peer observation. Classroom isolation was common. In district negotiations with the teachers association, the association agreed that site administrators should conduct more consistent and frequent teacher observations. Both the CSLA-trained principal and the staff development specialist assigned to the summer school recognized teachers' shared concern about student attendance -- or potential absences -- as leverage to introduce needed changes in instructional practices. We wanted to center the students' summer activities around a theme that would have relevance for these young teens. That theme, we decided, would be life skills -- skills needed to survive independently in today's society. The CSLA modules that guided our next steps were *Strengthening the Curriculum* and *Developing Instructional Skills*.

We Pulled Out All Stops

The principal developed a plan to incorporate benchmark projects in the basic skills curriculum for reading, writing, and math. The staff development specialist and a teacher-team developed a self-esteem component for each unit. The component included activities that strengthened students' decision-making and communication skills. The staff development specialist provided training for teachers in cooperative lesson planning. We also reviewed cooperative learning strategies and ways to team teach effectively. Then we introduced the biggest change.

The principal divided the staff into two instructional teams, each of which included one teacher each for writing/reading, math, social studies, and self-esteem. Both teams received ongoing help in working out ways to team-share skills, observe one another and give one another feedback. The principal and staff development specialist were always on hand to help teams work out schedules and

compatible instructional approaches. In line with district negotiations, the principal was able to spend many hours in the classes conducting observations and feedback.

This program -- with benchmark projects as its centerpiece -- was a full-blown success. Students told their teachers they didn't want to be absent because they were afraid they would miss something. Teachers saw students' writing noticeably improve. Math teachers found that students learned math functions because they saw a need for the skills to complete their benchmark projects. Social studies instructors felt the life skills focus gave students a much better understanding of their role in society and an appreciation for the diverse contributions that could be made.

The summer school benchmark approach culminated in a final project presented by each cooperative learning group to parents and other interested observers. The last two days of the summer program saw a crowd of proud parents and students celebrating students' creative work. Parents commented that their children had loved the summer school and were more relaxed and enthusiastic about learning than during the regular year. Typical parent comments were: "My child came home talking about it everyday," "My child especially enjoyed being a member of a group," "My child is more confident in her ability to challenge and complete work assignments," and with much gratitude: "He's never been easier to get along with."

The teachers were so enthusiastic about this cooperative teaching and learning approach that they volunteered to assist in training an interdisciplinary team pilot project for the regular school year. Certainly, we'll continue this format next summer.

A SUMMER SCHOOL MODEL

With the passage of Proposition 13, local districts had been unable to finance summer schools. In 1985, the state allowed for 5 percent funding for summer schools. Our district resumed its program, enrolling approximately 130 students. The first year's program offered enrichment curriculum in science, math, reading fine arts and computers. The program's success carried over into the second year.

Luckily, both summer school principals were active CSLA participants. Both had also been reading enrichment specialists with strong language arts backgrounds. Their joint ATC training changed an acceptable program into one that resulted in "standing room only" with yearly waiting lists that now contain double the number of students who could participate. Here's how.

Summer school had been more or less an extension of the regular school year. The demands were less, and the tone more relaxed; yet there was no unifying vision. To improve the program, the principals began to formulate a vision of the ideal summer school. A series of informal journal writing reflections through CSLA became the foundation for the district's next two summer school programs. The initial premises were: a summer school program should be different from regular school, it should entail both remedial and enrichment learning for all. Students should *want* to come to summer school and should know all of their classmates. The community should be aware of the program and encouraged to provide resources for it. The talents of staff members and parent volunteers should be used effectively. Students should be granted positive rewards. Hands-on activities and co-operative learning should prevail. Summer reading should be pleasurable and rewarded through school-wide incentives. The fine arts should also be used to enhance the language arts program and provide a unifying theme for student work.

Each principal for the two years carefully chose her staff. An open application went out to all staff members including a general description of the proposed curriculum. Applicants were asked to explain how they would implement their curricular area. Teachers whose approaches matched the total program's vision were hired. Applications were next sent to all students in grades three to eight. Students were accepted in order of returned forms. Classes were heterogeneously grouped by grade level. Gifted students and special education students worked side by side with equal involvement.

Celebrating a Schoolwide Theme

The key to unifying students and staff was our selection of a unifying learning theme for the summer. "Celebrate Liberty" became the slogan for the first session. "Reach for the Stars" became the vision for next year. Both themes were used in all correspondence and programming. Each teacher translated the theme into action. "Celebrate Liberty" and "Reach for the Stars" became the titles of student-

authored scripts written for the final performance. Every student in the school had a part in these productions. Reading incentive programs highlighted the themes. Coming to school became synonymous with "Celebrating Liberty" and "Reaching for the Stars."

Individual teachers used the themes to fit their own enrichment programs. Books read to students, writing assignments, and individual units of study were all theme centered. The art class, for example, made drawings of the Statue of Liberty while learning about perspective. Airplanes and hot-air balloons filled that role the next year. Science classes studied the physics principles behind rockets, and students built and launched their own models. Students read biographies of famous Americans who contributed to the search for liberty historically.

A local group of artists helped students write their own songs that Celebrated Liberty. Two aerojet engineers presented a space-age program, and the local speech therapist dressed as Sally Ryde. Both summer school programs incorporated community resources.

Because both principals have a strong commitment to reading, the summer schools were structured to promote reading in a pleasurable setting for every student. Home reading was an integral feature. The school followed the same format. Parents monitored the at-home reading, and students were rewarded for pages read. Silent reading in new paperback selections was part of each reading period. The library was integral to both years' programs. The first year students in each class took a walking trip to the county library to apply for library cards. The second year, a community volunteer acted as school librarian, making a library available on site. The principal at all times highlighted the importance of reading and set the tone for its place in the summer program.

Reflecting on Success

The summer school successes clearly validate the importance of school leaders forming a clear vision. Because the principals shared and were able to communicate a clearly defined vision and structure, everyone involved knew exactly where they were headed. The structure was not so rigid that it was confining. Individual creativity and leadership was encouraged. The vision took on a greater dimension than originally planned. By not prescribing every detail, teachers and volunteers were able to infuse their own creativity and enthusiasm. Ownership of the vision became shared.

Second, student became a part of the shared focus. Students coming to summer school knew it was their time to "Celebrate Liberty" or "Reach for the Stars." Their jobs here were clearly defined, and they felt important doing them. For them, summer school was exciting, fun and *actively educational. If they missed school, they would likely miss an exciting event.*

Parents also supported the program. They were kept informed of all events through parent newsletters. Student newspapers and principal messages went home regularly. This became the link between the school vision and the home. Parents not only supported what was being accomplished at school, but actually postponed vacations to avoid absenteeism. The local newspapers aided in communicating the summer vision to its readers.

In retrospect, this turned out to be an excellent way to build a summer program. We think it could be a model followed by summer schools to come. Once the vision is established and the structure set, filling in the details follows naturally.

EPILOGUE

If the reflective narratives have prompted new insights or new questions about the work of instructional leaders in elementary and secondary schools, then this book has succeeded in its purpose. If you have learned alternative strategies for resolving problems that confront school administrators, you have to thank the talent and ingenuity of the contributing authors and the high quality of CSLA training. The administrators who have written are unanimous in their praise of CSLA. However well prepared for their work prior to joining CSLA, the contributing authors attribute renewed commitment to instructional leadership to the relevance and excellence of the CSLA experience.

If you are an instructional leader now considering whether or not to write about what you have learned on-the-job, you might want to know what the contributing authors thought about the writing activity. FWL was able to contact about two-thirds of our authors to ask whether or not writing made them think about their work differently. The vast majority reported that it did. In particular, they felt that writing helped raise their awareness of the complexity of their work. Here are some of their comments.

Writing about this experience helped me to remove myself from the forest to see the trees. Each time I re-wrote my [narrative] my perspective grew.

I had to really think about and examine closely my own thoughts leading up to the decisions I made. I had to be able to articulate clearly and completely what the "before" section of my narrative contained because until I began to write, I had been operating primarily on instinct.

The process of writing, reading, discussing, re-writing, presenting and getting feedback was both valuable and validating. Then to publish and receive acknowledgement made me feel even more professional. I'm ready to do this again, perhaps look at [the events of my narrative] one year later.

Putting my reflections on paper was like putting puzzle pieces together. At the end, I was able to see the total picture much more clearly. I also understand what happened in a new way. I see points where I might have done some things differently and gotten different results.

Writing pulls the events of many weeks, sometimes months or years, into focus. It gives a sense of organization to what has been happening. It also makes evaluation of the process, not just the project, much easier.

I am more aware of the length of time it takes for change to occur. I also realize more clearly the many side effects [of my actions] and how original plans are constantly being revised and changed as a process works itself out.

All the details! All the ups and downs! [My narrative] could have been a novel! Watching myself edit down helped me see all I had done. I was proud in spite of the fact that I had not "solved" or "concluded" the work.

A few authors told us that they lamented their inability to share more routinely with colleagues in their districts. They viewed the writing activity as a way of reaching out to peers beyond their district for feedback and validation. As one commented: *Writing gave me a professional boost I will not soon forget. I'm in a district that doesn't encourage this degree of honesty about what happens in our work and how it feels when the going gets tricky. In my case, writing [the narrative] was a bit like talking myself through the issue — and it helped!*

In reporting the comments of the contributing authors, we do not want to suggest that writing abouton -the-job experience is a panacea for professional growth. We do hope that some of our readers will try reflective writing as a strategy for thinking through circumstances that arise in the course of their work. We also hope that administrators will find ways to preserve for others the wealth of knowledge they have accumulated over the course of many years of working in schools. Thinking again about that conference room full of school administrators talked about in the introduction — and the knowledge about instructional leadership that resides with them, consider what the profession has lost if they each retire without recording what they have learned.

Through the reflections of the contributing authors, we have learned new perspectives on the challenges of instructional leadership in elementary and secondary schools in California. We believe their perspectives have an important place in the literature of school administration.